TOP 10 STATUS SYMBOLS OF THE PAST

WHAT IF... HANNIBAL HAD TAKEN ROME?

BBC

HISTORY REVEALED

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

THE BLACK DEATH

Discover the devastating plague that shook the medieval world

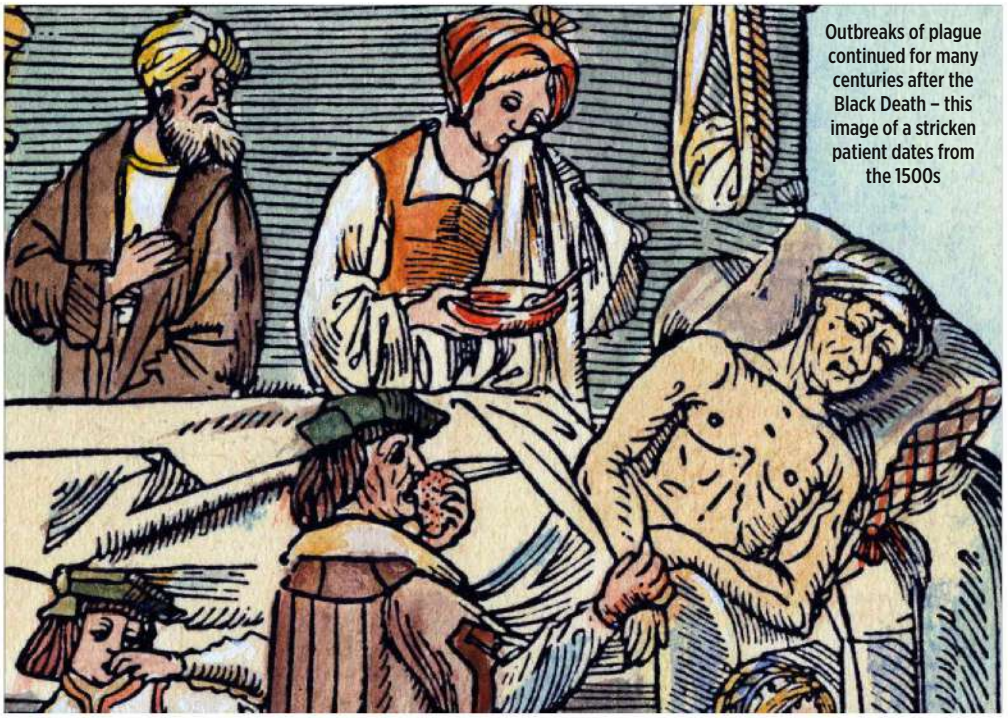
THE REAL ROBINSON CRUSOE

PLUS Why do we say 'touch wood'? Who was blamed for Chernobyl?

9 772632 693042 17 >
ISSUE 117 / FEBRUARY 2023 / £5.50

WAR THUNDER
New? GET YOUR FREE BONUS
Over 700 of historically accurate aircraft and ground vehicles
PLAY NOW FOR FREE
WARTHUNDER.COM/FLY
Windows
STEAM
Mac
oculus
VIVE
PS4
XBOX ONE
PS5
XBOX SERIES X|S
Gaijin
12
www.pegi.info

WELCOME FEBRUARY 2023



Outbreaks of plague continued for many centuries after the Black Death – this image of a stricken patient dates from the 1500s

In the mid-14th century, the world was brought to its knees by a devastating disease. First recorded in 1346, this deadly illness – now known as the Black Death – ripped around the globe, decimating populations and causing untold anguish and misery. **In this month's Essential Guide, we've enlisted the help of Professor John Hatcher, who helps us answer some of the big questions about the Black Death,** including how the disease was spread, its terrifying symptoms, the astonishing death rate, and how medieval society responded to the arrival of plague in their towns and villages. Turn to page 27 to get started.

Elsewhere, **we explore 10 status symbols from history that would have made you the envy of your neighbours** – from pineapples and tulips, to follies and wigs (*page 50*). We also take a look at some incredible images of bygone Newcastle (*page 58*), **ask what would have happened had Hannibal managed to take Rome in the third century BC** (*page 64*), and share some fascinating facts about London's first Zeppelin raid, in May 1915 (*page 24*).

Plus, we'll also be delving into **the life and work of trailblazing LGBTQ+ and civil rights activist Pauli Murray** (*page 20*), and tell the story of Scottish mariner Alexander Selkirk, who spent more than four years as a castaway on an uninhabited island in the South Pacific (*page 14*).

See you next month!

Charlotte Hodgman
Editor

THIS MONTH'S BIG NUMBERS

12,000
The number of molluscs it took to create 1.4g of the ancient dye Tyrian purple

c50
The number of Huguenots killed at Wassy, France, in 1562, triggering the French Wars of Religion

20,000
The number of people who once lived in the underground city of Derinkuyu, Turkey

GET INVOLVED

FIND US ONLINE

Visit our online home, ***historyextra.com***, for a wealth of exciting content on British and world history, as well as an extensive archive of magazine content from *BBC History Revealed* and our sister publication *BBC History Magazine*.

HISTORYEXTRA PODCAST

Download episodes for free from iTunes and other providers, or via *historyextra.com/podcast*

CONTACT US

facebook.com/HistoryExtra
twitter.com/HistoryExtra
@HistoryExtra

EMAIL US: haveyoursay@historyrevealed.com
OR POST: Have Your Say, *BBC History Revealed*, Immediate Media, Eagle House, Colston Avenue, Bristol, BS1 4ST
EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES: 0117 927 9009

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES:

PHONE: 03330 162 116
EMAIL: historyrevealed@buysubscriptions.com
POST: *BBC History Revealed*, PO Box 3320, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton, NN4 7BF
OVERSEAS: In the US/Canada you can contact us at: Immediate Media, PO Box 401, Williamsport, PA 17703, USA
immediatemedia@buysubscriptions.com
Toll-free 888-941-5623

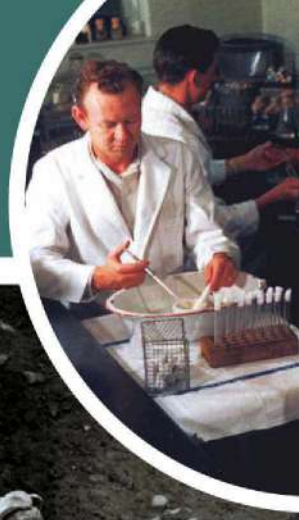
GET YOUR DIGITAL COPY

Digital versions of *BBC History Revealed* are available for iOS, Kindle Fire, PC and Mac. Visit iTunes, Amazon or *zinio.com* to find out more.

USPS Identification Statement
BBC History Revealed (ISSN 2632-6930) (USPS 022-450) February 2023 is published 13 times a year (monthly, with a Christmas issue in December) by Immediate Media Company London Limited, Vineyard House, 44 Brook Green, Hammersmith, London, W6 7BT, UK. Distributed in the US by NPS Media Group, 2 Enterprise Drive, Suite 420, Shelton, CT 06484. Periodicals postage paid at Shelton, CT and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *BBC History Revealed*, PO Box 401, Williamsport, PA 17703, USA

COVER: ALAMY X3, GETTY IMAGES X5 / ON THIS PAGE: ALAMY X1, JENI NOTT X1

CONTENTS FEBRUARY 2023



YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

THE BLACK DEATH

28 Everything you wanted to know about the Black Death
Professor John Hatcher answers key questions about the devastating disease that decimated the medieval world

34 The shadow of death descends
After arising in Asia in the mid-1340s, the Black Death went on to consume most of Europe

38 Living through the Black Death
Discover how medieval society reacted to the plague – from widespread panic to the desertion of loved ones

41 Going into lockdown
Quarantine was just one of many measures deployed in an attempt to restrict the spread of the deadly disease

44 Doctor's orders
Medieval physicians recommended a range of preventative measures and 'cures' – some more appetising than others

46 Punishment from on high
An unshakeable conviction that the plague was a punishment from God had terrible consequences

48 Opinion
Professor John Hatcher examines the legacy of the Black Death and the questions that remain unanswered

49 Get hooked
Take your knowledge further with our pick of books, podcasts and radio programmes

▲ How did the Black Death gets its name and how did it spread? Our expert historical consultant reveals all

FEATURES

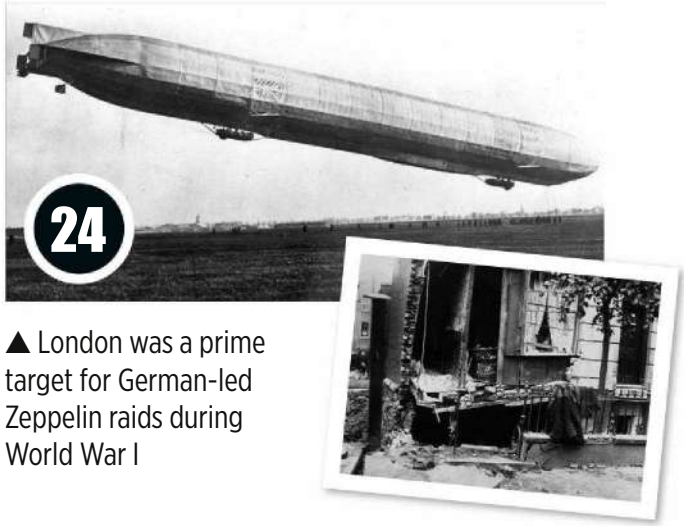
24 9 things you (probably) didn't know about London's first Zeppelin raid
How a German airship wreaked havoc over the city in May 1915

50 Top 10 status symbols
A look at the bizarre array of items once flaunted by the rich and powerful – from tulips to pineapples

56 Great Paintings: The Piazzetta, Venice
The secrets behind a dramatic watercolour by JMW Turner

58 Forgotten Newcastle
Archive photographs charting Newcastle's rich history

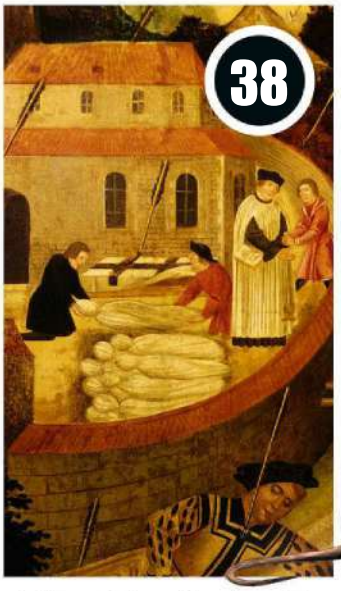
64 What if... Hannibal had captured Rome?



▲ London was a prime target for German-led Zeppelin raids during World War I

GETTY IMAGES X12, ALAMY X2, NEWCASTLE LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY X1

48 ◀ Scientists and historians are still trying to solve the myriad questions that surround the Black Death



▲ How did medieval society cope with the devastation?

▲ Millions died as bubonic plague swept the globe

▲ Drinking urine was said to ward off the disease

▲ Some used flagellation to assuage the wrath of God

▲ Ten status symbols from history that would have made you the envy of all

▲ Incredible images from Newcastle's history – from football to shipping

EVERY MONTH

6 Snapshots
A 1930s Walt Disney classic, and more

12 Things We've Learned This Month
The French baguette receives Unesco status, museum to return Benin Bronzes, and more

14 This Month in... 1709
Mariner Alexander Selkirk is finally rescued

17 The History Detective
Dr Nell Darby delves into the tragic story of a child murder from 1928

18 In a Nutshell
The 16th-century French Wars of Religion

20 Spotlight on... activist and trailblazer Pauli Murray

67 Q&A
Was Molly Malone a real person? This, and other historical conundrums answered

73 TV, Film & Radio
This month's history entertainment

76 Books & Podcasts
The latest historical releases and podcasts

78 What's On
Exhibitions and events to see this month

79 Prize Crossword

81 Next Issue

82 Photo Finish

22

LIKE IT? SUBSCRIBE!
GET 50% OFF

SNAPSHOTS

1938 THE FAIREST OF THEM ALL

Released in cinemas on 4 February 1938, Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was an instant box office success, seen by millions of children across the globe. In fact, such was the film's cultural impact that – many months after its premiere – the managers of this south London department store decided it would be canny publicity to hire its own cast of characters to serenade shoppers with Christmas carols. Whether the ploy worked isn't known, but the movie's popularity certainly didn't wane. At the 1939 Academy Awards, Walt Disney was presented with a special Oscar in recognition of the film's commercial and technological achievements, consisting of one regular-sized statuette and seven miniature ones.

GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS

1942 FLORAL TRIBUTE

Standing on the beach at Kaneohe, Hawaii, a group of US enlistees place Polynesian garlands known as *lei* on the graves of comrades killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor the previous year. The surprise raid, which had begun shortly before 8am on 7 December 1941, had seen the Hawaiian naval base attacked by hundreds of Japanese warplanes, resulting in the deaths of more than 2,400 people and the complete destruction of two battleships. The fatal strike had led US president Franklin D Roosevelt to declare war on Japan the following day, describing 7 December as a "date which will live in infamy".

GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS

1936 THE MEAL HIGH CLUB

Lunch is prepared in the galley of the Imperial Airways aeroplane *Scylla* on 19 November 1936. The 39-seat, four-engine aircraft flew for the first time in 1934, on the London to Paris route. Along with its sister plane, *Syrinx*, *Scylla* was held up as a new benchmark in the level of comfort it offered passengers. Imperial Airways had been formed just a decade before, in 1924, after a government report found that merging existing aircraft companies would help bolster Britain's commercial airline sector against foreign competition.

GETTY IMAGES

THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

RECENT HISTORY HEADLINES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE

MAIN: Lyn Blackmore of Museum of London Archaeology holds one of the pendants that formed part of the necklace

LEFT: An artist's impression of the burial site shows the location of the various objects as they may have been arrayed at time of the woman's interment

BELOW LEFT: The full 30-piece necklace, alongside a reconstruction of how it may have originally looked

BURIAL SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON EARLY MEDIEVAL BRITAIN

Archaeologists have hailed the discovery of an early medieval female burial in Northamptonshire as the "most significant" of its kind. Unearthed near the village of Harpole, the grave was found to contain the remains of a high-status woman who died between 630 and 670 AD, along with an ornate necklace made of gold and semi-precious stones. Further excavations revealed several other items hidden in the soil, including a cross decorated with images of human faces. Experts from Museum of London Archaeology, who were tasked with excavating the site, believe the woman may have been an early Christian leader, practising the faith at a time when pagan beliefs were still widespread across the British Isles.

GETTY IMAGES X1, MOLA X1, MOLA (HUGH GATT) X1, MOLA (ANDY CHOPPING) X1, CATHERINE SCOTT X1, EGYPTIAN MINISTRY FOR TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES X2, HORNIMAN MUSEUM AND GARDENS X2

ENNISKILLEN WORKHOUSE RENOVATED

The only surviving part of a Victorian workhouse in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, has been preserved thanks to a £2.3m National Lottery Heritage Fund grant. Now converted into a business enterprise hub and heritage centre, the redeveloped site also enables visitors to learn about the building's history and its occupants. Artefacts on display include the original workhouse bell, several pairs of shoes, and a Bible (*pictured*) bearing the handwritten name of a young boy, William Ferguson, highlighting the broad range of ages that once dwelt there.

TUNNEL MAY LEAD TO CLEOPATRA'S TOMB

After 20 years of searching, archaeologist Dr Kathleen Martinez thinks she may be on the brink of finally uncovering the burial place of Cleopatra, the last of Egypt's Macedonian rulers. Excavations at a temple in Taposiris Magna, 30 miles west of Alexandria, have revealed a 1,305-metre-long tunnel (*pictured right*), leading to subterranean chambers stretching out towards the Mediterranean. Objects from Egypt's Ptolemaic period (named after Cleopatra's dynasty) have also been unearthed at the site.

FRENCH BAGUETTE GAINS UNESCO STATUS

The baguette, a quintessential symbol of France, has been added to Unesco's 'intangible cultural heritage' list. Although its origins have long been disputed – with some scholars suggesting it was invented by Napoleon Bonaparte and others claiming it was the brainchild of an Austrian baker in the 1830s – the iconic bread is still a staple of French culture. Nevertheless, the rising popularity of large supermarkets has resulted in a decline in artisan bakeries and baguette-making in recent decades. According to Unesco chief Audrey Azoulay, the bread's inclusion on the list "celebrates the French way of life".

101

The age at which Johnny Johnson, the last surviving veteran of the famous 'Dambusters' raid of World War II, died in December 2022

MUSEUM TO RETURN BENIN BRONZES

The Horniman Museum in southeast London is set to return 72 objects plundered from the former Kingdom of Benin, whose territory today forms part of Nigeria. Among the artefacts are several brass plaques from a collection of items known as the Benin Bronzes, which decorated the palace of the *oba*, or king. Many of the kingdom's treasures, including the bronzes, were looted during a British assault on Benin City in 1897, with Nigeria launching its bid to reclaim the objects in the 1930s. Restitution has since become a fierce topic of debate, putting pressure on museums still in possession of such items.

Alexander Selkirk is finally rescued

Marooned on a remote desert island for more than four years, Scottish mariner Alexander Selkirk survived against all the odds, gaining fame, fortune and a lasting influence on popular culture

Born in Lower Largo, Fife, in 1676, Alexander Selkirk never quite shook off his reputation as a tearaway. In 1695, a summons to appear before a church court over his misconduct during a service was postponed when it was discovered he had gone to sea, possibly joining a colonising mission to Panama. His return, in 1701, courted further controversy after he assaulted several family members. Adept at mathematics and geography, Selkirk then enlisted as a navigator for privateer William Dampier's expedition to South America: a decision that would condemn him to more than four years alone on a remote island.

Privateers – effectively state-sanctioned pirates – were crucial to the European powers' scramble for wealth in the New World. Warring ships fought each other with cannon on the high seas, while deliberately overcrowded crews would deplete over time through disease, malnutrition and conflict. Dampier's voyage was comprised of two ships – *St George* and *Cinque Ports* – and set sail from Kinsale, Ireland, in September 1703 with Selkirk aboard the latter. As the ships crossed the Atlantic, rancour and dissension grew.

MAIN: **Selkirk's goatskins and taming of the island's wild cats has become part of legend thanks to *Robinson Crusoe***

ABOVE: **A portrait of William Dampier – leader of the voyage that abandoned Selkirk in the South Pacific**

Más a Tierra's rugged coastline first came into Selkirk's view in 1704

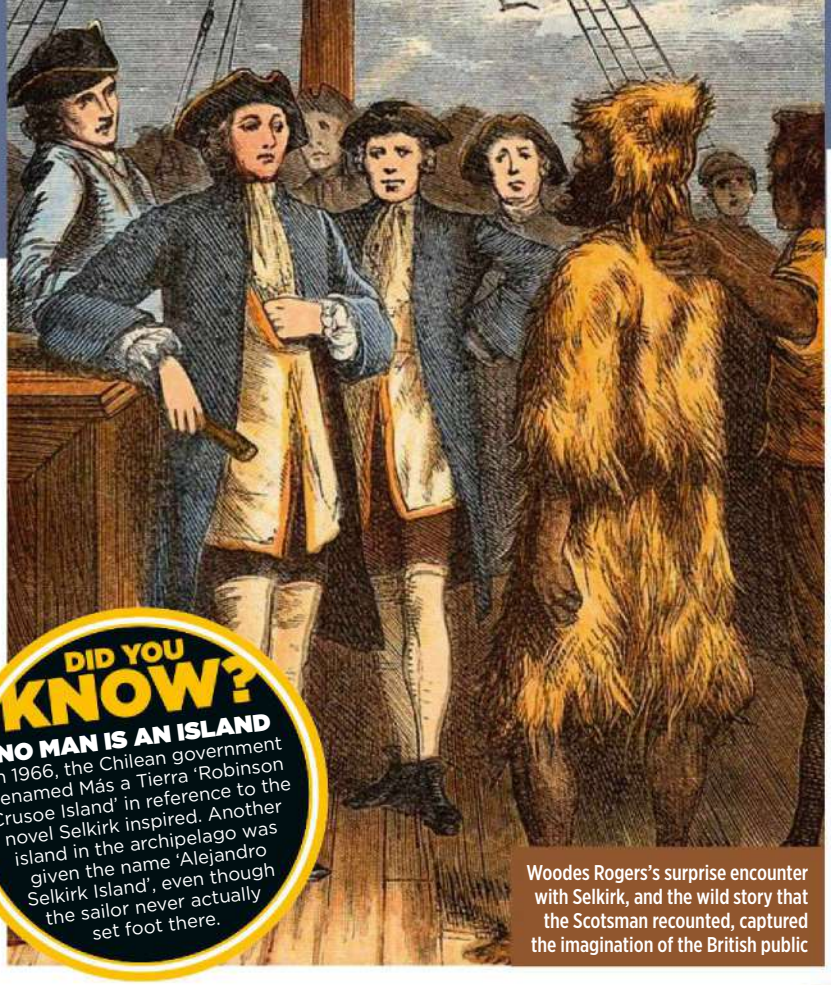
WAYWARD NAVIGATOR

In November, Thomas Stradling assumed the captaincy of *Cinque Ports* after his superior succumbed to fever. Once the ships had rounded Cape Horn and entered the Pacific, the crew's dislike for Stradling turned mutinous. In spring 1704, Stradling broke with Dampier following an argument, and *Cinque Ports* spent that summer raiding alone. During a stopover at Más a Tierra Island in the Juan Fernández archipelago, Selkirk quarrelled with Stradling about the ship's declining seaworthiness. Refusing to continue with the voyage, he was left there with a Bible, a musket, some gunpowder, a pot for boiling food, a knife and a small amount of tobacco. *Cinque Ports* foundered soon after, dooming Stradling and a few survivors to a Spanish prison.

Four years and four months later, on 2 February 1709, *Duke* – a frigate under the command of English privateer Woodes Rogers – anchored off Más a Tierra. Situated 420 miles west of Valparaíso, Chile, it was seemingly uninhabited save for some goats introduced by the Spanish years before. Upon disembarking, a landing party was astonished to encounter a bedraggled man, "cloth'd in Goat-Skins", overcome with joy at the sight of them.

Selkirk's identity was corroborated by *Duke*'s pilot, William Dampier, the leader of the very expedition that had abandoned him. Ravaged by scurvy, the crew were soon indebted to their

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X4



Woodes Rogers's surprise encounter with Selkirk, and the wild story that the Scotsman recounted, captured the imagination of the British public

DID YOU KNOW?

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

In 1966, the Chilean government renamed Más a Tierra 'Robinson Crusoe Island' in reference to the novel Selkirk inspired. Another island in the archipelago was given the name 'Alejandro Selkirk Island', even though the sailor never actually set foot there.

> "A landing party was astonished to encounter a bedraggled man, 'cloth'd in Goat-Skins', overcome with joy"

eccentric host, who Rogers jokingly designated the archipelago's 'governor'. The castaway's aptitude for hunting and his intimate understanding of the island's ecology proved indispensable to their recuperation. Delivered from his solitude, Selkirk began to recount his incredible story to Rogers and the crew.

FAME AND FORTUNE

Soon after *Cinque Ports* had disappeared over the horizon, Selkirk had fallen into despair and contemplated suicide. Besides the goats, the sailor's only company on the island had been some rats brought over by European pioneers (which gnawed on him after dark), some feral cats (which he domesticated), and a herd of gigantic southern elephant seals.

Eventually, Selkirk had rallied himself, constructing a shelter and learning to live off the island's abundant wildlife, including spiny lobster, watercress, turnips and pepper. He had taught himself to sew using a nail and some goatskins, and had read his Bible to quell his mind. The Scotsman had also kept a fire going day and night, but been forced to extinguish it at the sight of Spanish ships; fearful of the Spaniards' reputation for torture and enslavement, he did not want to risk being captured.

Selkirk's rescue in 1709 led to him joining Rogers's expedition, and – thanks to his share of *Duke*'s plunder – he returned to Britain in 1711 a wealthy man. He gave an interview about his ordeal to the essayist Richard Steele for *The Englishman* magazine, and also appeared in Rogers's *A Cruising Voyage round the World*, which was published in 1712. Daniel Defoe, a political activist and writer, became fascinated by Selkirk's story, and clearly drew on the sailor's experiences when writing his 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe*.

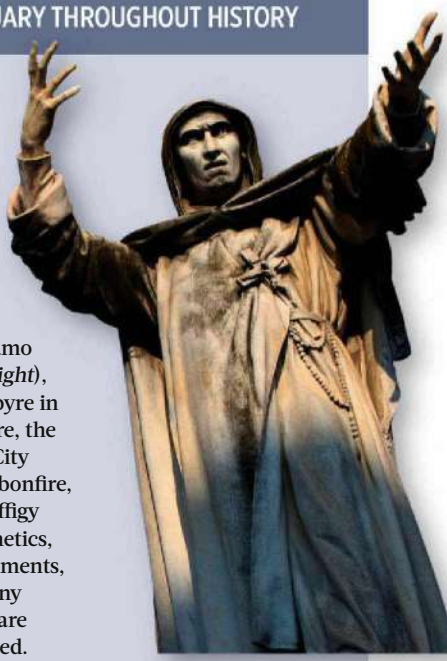
Celebrity, however, was bittersweet for Selkirk, and he soon grew restless with life on land. After possibly committing bigamy, he enlisted as an officer on HMS *Weymouth*, tasked with intercepting pirates along Africa's west coast. Restocking at ports along the way, yellow fever soon broke out on board. Selkirk succumbed to the disease on 13 December 1721, aged 45, and was buried at sea.

WORDS: DANNY BIRD

LISTEN
An episode of the *HistoryExtra* podcast, featuring naval historian Professor Andrew Lambert, discusses the archipelago where Selkirk was marooned: *historyextra.com/crusoe-pod*

OTHER ANNIVERSARIES

A LOOK BACK AT OTHER EVENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN FEBRUARY THROUGHOUT HISTORY



7 February 1497

BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES

On Shrove Tuesday, disciples of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (*depicted right*), gather around a large pyre in Florence's public square, the Piazza della Signoria. City representatives light a bonfire, over which looms an effigy of Satan. Mirrors, cosmetics, dresses, musical instruments, books, paintings and any object deemed 'sinful' are ritualistically incinerated.

16 February 1923

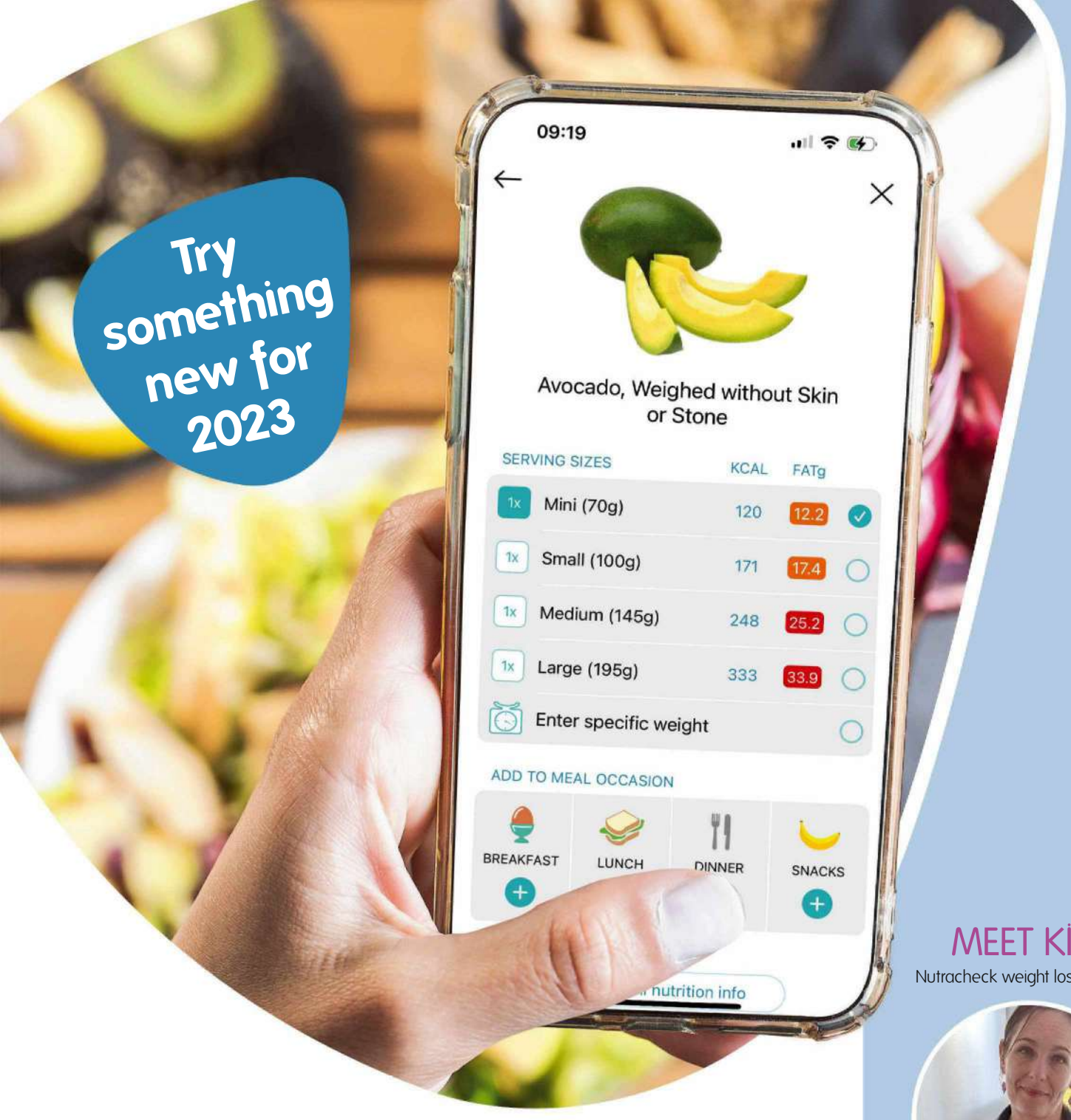
HOWARD CARTER UNSEALS TUTANKHAMUN'S BURIAL CHAMBER

Three months after entering Tutankhamun's tomb for the first time, Carter uses a chisel to break through the plaster wall dividing the antechamber from the presumed burial chamber. Confronted by an enormous golden shrine, the Egyptologist is elated to find that the sarcophagus (*pictured*) containing the boy king's mummy is intact.

22 February 1797

FRENCH SOLDIERS LAND IN WALES

A force of up to 1,400 French troops lands near the coastal town of Fishguard in Pembrokeshire, south Wales. With orders to march on the English city of Bristol, the peculiar location of the invasion surprises the government in London. Devised by French revolutionary General Lazare Hoche, the landing is part of a larger invasion planned for the British Isles, aimed at supporting the Society of United Irishmen in their struggle for independence from British rule.



Nutracheck – the UK's top-rated calorie and nutrient tracking app

Read Kim's story, find out more and claim your FREE seven-day trial

Download on the App Store | GET IT ON Google Play

4.8 rating - iOS App Store. Correct at time of print

MEET KIM

Nutracheck weight loss: **9st 7lbs**

"Life is easier, my job as a teacher is so much easier. I have more energy now."

nutra check

THE HISTORY DETECTIVE

DR NELL DARBY INVESTIGATES COLD CASES FROM THE ARCHIVES

CASE #006

THE PARENTS WHO NEVER RECOVERED

COLUMNIST DR NELL DARBY TELLS THE TRAGIC STORY OF SIX-YEAR-OLD MARY JANE SEWELL, WHOSE UNSOLVED 1928 MURDER LED TO SPURIOUS ALLEGATIONS BEING MADE AGAINST HER OWN MOTHER AND FATHER

Sometimes, an event as horrific as a murder, particularly when it involves a child, can have lifelong repercussions. In the case of Mary Jane Sewell, her parents could not live with knowing that their child had died, that her murderer had not been caught – and that they had been suspected of the murder themselves.

Mary Jane Sewell was six when she died yards from her family home in 1928. She lived in the mining village of Sunnybrow, County Durham, at 12 Hill Street, which was in a row of miners' cottages. Mary Jane's father, Anthony, had fought in World War I, but was now an out-of-work miner; her mother, Isabella, was at home. The couple had had four children – a boy, followed by three girls. The eldest daughter, Irene, died of bronchitis shortly after Anthony returned from the war; the youngest, Dora, had died of convulsions at the age of 18 months, just two months before Mary Jane's death.

On the evening of 29 February, Mary Jane left her home to run some errands. As the night wore on, her parents believed that she must have gone to play with some friends, but then it got later, and they became worried and called the police. At around 11.30pm, Mary Jane's body was found in a nearby field. She had been sexually assaulted and suffocated.

At Mary Jane's inquest, her parents faced aggressive questioning. It emerged that Isabella had been seeking work as a domestic cook, and in a job interview lied about her family, not admitting to having a daughter. When questioned, Isabella cried and admitted that she and Anthony were "down and out" – she thought that by pretending to have no family commitments, she might be able to earn some money.

GIRL OF SIX KILLED.

MINER FINDS HIS CHILD SUFFOCATED.

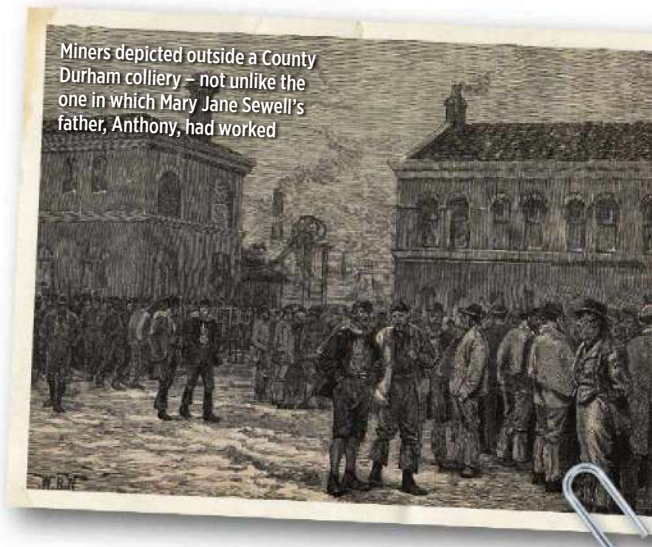
Search is being made by detectives for the murderer of Mary Jane Sewell, aged six years and nine months, who was found dead—suffocated—100 yards from her home in the mining hamlet of Sunnybrow, seven miles from Durham.

The child left her home in Hill-street at 7.30 on Wednesday night to return an evening paper (which her father had borrowed) to Mrs. Love, a neighbour living in Percy-street, two or three streets away. According to the Love family the child left their house about 7.45.

When Mary Jane had not returned at nine o'clock her parents became alarmed and informed the police. The father, Anthony Sewell, a miner, with the help of a neighbour, John Teesdale Hayton, began a systematic search.

They found the child behind a poultry house on a patch of disused grassland. She was lying on her back with a knotted handkerchief pressed into her mouth.

A report about the murder from an edition of the *Daily News and Westminster Gazette*. Despite gaining national press coverage, the case is largely forgotten today



Miners depicted outside a County Durham colliery – not unlike the one in which Mary Jane Sewell's father, Anthony, had worked

POISON AND POVERTY

The coroner then questioned Anthony, raising suspicions about the fact that all three Sewell daughters had died, and asking, in relation to Mary Jane, whether "the child might not be wanted, and it was inconvenient to have her". He thought poverty might have encouraged Isabella and Anthony to simply get rid of their daughter, and even though the inquest found that Mary Jane had been murdered by persons unknown, the coroner believed this was "not a very satisfactory conclusion". The suspicion remained, then, that Mary Jane's parents may have murdered her.

Isabella Sewell refused to stay in Sunnybrow, and moved in with her brother. In July 1928, five months after her daughter's death and suffering from depression, she tried to poison herself. Suicide was still a criminal offence, but Isabella escaped prison, instead being put on probation for a year. Anthony Sewell, meanwhile, moved to London to work as a railway labourer, but in 1937, suffering from depression, he was hit by a train near Cricklewood Station. At his inquest, a verdict of suicide was recorded.

The coroner at Mary Jane's inquest was quick to ascribe blame to her parents, and had little understanding of poverty and its impact on families. The real perpetrator of Mary Jane's murder was never caught, and instead, her parents were left to deal with the trauma of their daughters' deaths.

DR NELL DARBY is a crime historian and writer, and the presenter of the CBS Reality series *Murder by the Sea*. Her latest book is *Sister Sleuths: Female Detectives in Britain* (Pen & Sword History, 2021)

LISTEN

BBC SOUNDS

A range of true crime podcast series are available to stream via BBC Sounds. To access the collection, visit *bit.ly/3X1r2Zx*

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE X1, GETTY IMAGES X5

The French Wars of Religion

In the late 16th century, France was torn apart by a series of violent religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, with several noble families competing for mastery over the kingdom's salvation

WHAT WERE THE FRENCH WARS OF RELIGION AND WHY DID THEY BREAK OUT?

Beginning in 1562, the French Wars of Religion were a series of eight civil wars fought between Roman Catholics and Protestants (or Huguenots) that engulfed the country for 36 years. With the arrival of Protestantism earlier that century into France, a kingdom whose population was overwhelmingly Catholic, years of mounting suspicion and sporadic violence between the two faiths soon divided French society. Efforts by the Crown to tolerate the Huguenots were tentative, although the Edict of Saint-Germain, adopted in January 1562, granted them limited rights.

Nevertheless, fervent Catholics, such as the noble Guise family, believed Protestantism to be heresy and rejected the edict. Two months later, while travelling through Wassy, a town on his estate, Francis, 2nd Duke of Guise and his troops were outraged to discover Huguenots at worship inside a barn. A standoff ensued and quickly descended into a bloodbath, which left about 50 Huguenots dead, including several women and a child. It was the event that triggered the Wars of Religion.

WHO WERE THE HUGUENOTS AND WHAT ROLE DID THEY PLAY IN THE ROAD TO WAR?

A generation before the conflict broke out, Protestantism had gained a footing in France through a creed known as Calvinism. Derived from the teachings of French theologian and reformer John Calvin, among its central tenets were the pre-eminence of biblical scripture and of predestination (the notion that God has already determined the fate of all souls). Labelled as Huguenots – the origin of the name is disputed – by their opponents, its adherents identified as *réformés* (reformed).

Huguenot influence began to tip the balance of power after several nobles converted, and devout congregations prospered across France. But their emergence fomented tensions and inflamed regional rivalries. The Affair of the Placards in 1534, during which anti-Catholic posters appeared in Paris and other cities, and even on the king's bedchamber door, ended with the mass execution of Huguenots. The sectarian division only deepened as a result.

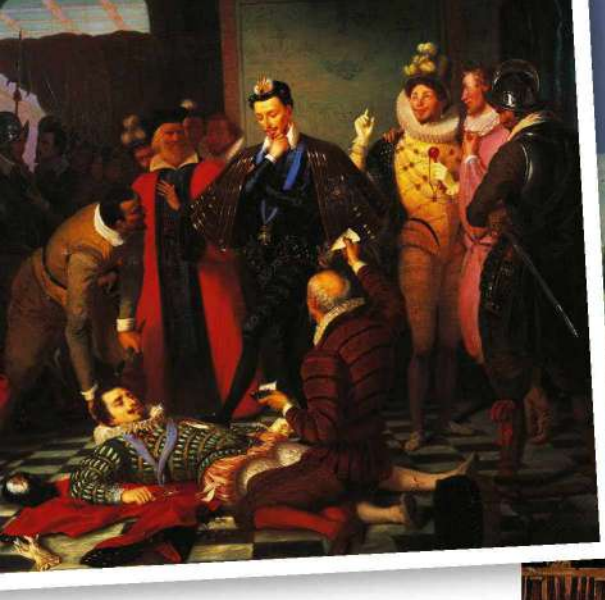
WHAT ROLE DID THE FRENCH MONARCHY PLAY IN THE WARS?

The monarchy's capacity to unify the realm had been severely compromised in 1559 after King Henry II was fatally wounded during a jousting tournament. His successor, the teenage Francis II, became the target of an abortive kidnapping plot by Huguenot nobles,

BELOW LEFT: **Both sides used propaganda to vilify the other, as seen in this scene showing alleged Huguenot atrocities against Catholics**

BELOW: **Catherine de Medici – holding the hand of Charles IX – attempted to steer the Valois dynasty through France's religious turmoil**

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X1



who aspired to displace the Guises' influence at court. Shortly thereafter, Francis's sudden death in December 1560 saw his 10-year-old brother accede as Charles IX. His mother, Catherine de Medici, became regent, and strove to accommodate France's burgeoning Huguenot faithful, while upholding the monarchy's Catholic underpinnings

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE ST BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY MASSACRE, AND WHAT HAD CAUSED IT?

The Wars of Religion's most notorious incident occurred in August 1572, two years after an uneasy peace had been brokered. Catherine, recognising both Huguenot control over key cities and the bleak economic legacy of France's expansionist policies half a century before, resolved to entrench the ceasefire through marriage. On 18 August, her daughter, Margaret, married King Henry III of Navarre, the bride's Huguenot second cousin.

With thousands of Huguenots gathered in the capital to celebrate the nuptials, tensions remained high before and after the wedding, while outside Paris a 4,000-strong Huguenot army was camped. Four days later, an assailant shot at and injured the highly respected Huguenot Admiral Gaspard II de Coligny as he walked down the street. Appalled, Huguenot nobles implored Charles IX to punish those responsible, with suspicions falling squarely on the Guises. The young king vowed that justice would prevail, all the while as key suspects planned to slip out of the city.

Following a series of crisis meetings, a decision was made to cull the Huguenot leadership on the night of 23 August, the eve of St Bartholomew's Day. Henry, 3rd Duke of Guise led a group to Coligny's quarters, whereupon he was murdered and his body defiled by a Catholic mob. Ordinary people turned on their neighbours to butcher Huguenot men, women and children. The bloodletting continued for weeks, spreading to the provinces. Catherine has long been blamed for inciting the bloodbath, despite little evidence to support this. Indeed, she took an active role in tending to Coligny's recovery and in protecting Huguenots at risk. Although estimates of those killed varies significantly – with as many as 2,000 in Paris alone and up to 20,000 or 30,000 nationwide – hundreds of bodies were later dredged up from the River Seine.

> "Ordinary people turned on their neighbours to butcher Huguenot men, women and children"

HOW DID THE WARS END?

Henry of Navarre was forced to renounce his faith and became a prisoner of the French court. He escaped in 1576 and led a rebellion against the Crown, but when he became heir presumptive to the French throne in 1584, the Guises formed the Catholic League to prevent the accession of a 'heretic' monarch. A year later, the Treaty of Nemours revoked all previous edicts, expelled Huguenots from public office, and blocked them from the royal succession.

The resulting War of the Three Henrys was the final act in the Wars of Religion. Horrified by the League's growing power, Henry III of France had the Duke of Guise assassinated in December 1588 and allied himself to his Huguenot cousin and heir, Henry of Navarre. The League exacted vengeance by killing Henry III, the last Valois king. With his death, Henry of Navarre became Henry IV of France in 1589, its only Protestant monarch.

Determined to bring the wars to a decisive end, the new king embraced Catholicism in 1593, which won over royalist support, before capturing Paris from the League the following year. Supported by Philip II of Spain, the League denounced Henry's conversion as expedient and refused to recognise him as their sovereign, leading to war between the two kingdoms in 1595.

ABOVE LEFT: **The 1588 assassination of Henry, 3rd Duke of Guise on the orders of Henry III (*centre*) was a turning point in the wars**

ABOVE CENTRE: **Paris became a charnel house during the St Bartholomew's Day massacre, as shown in this painting by François Dubois**

ABOVE RIGHT: **Henry IV (on horseback entering Paris in 1594) finally ended the wars and bridged France's sectarian divide**

WHAT WAS ENACTED BY THE EDICT OF NANTES?

In 1598, nearly 40 years of war finally came to an end. Henry IV issued the Edict of Nantes, acclaiming the primacy of Roman Catholicism in France while conferring freedom of conscience and worship. Huguenots were absolved of past crimes and granted access to public office and control over certain garrisons. The edict endured until 1685, when Louis XIV had it revoked, which sparked a mass exodus of Huguenots overseas.

WORDS: DANNY BIRD

LISTEN

BBC WORLD SERVICE Bridget Kendall and guests discuss the upheaval, diaspora and legacy of the Huguenots on an episode of *The Forum*: bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszjvw

Pauli Murray: civil rights lawyer

Trailblazing attorney Pauli Murray devoted her legal career to tackling racial and gender discrimination in the US. But what drove the civil rights icon and LGBTQ+ pioneer to take up the fight in the first place?

When Pauli Murray attempted to enrol at the University of North Carolina in 1938, she was refused due to her race. She went on to study civil rights law at the historically black Howard University in Washington DC, committed to ending Jim Crow, the system of racial segregation in the US. Graduating top of her class, Murray then tried to enrol at Harvard and was again refused, this time due to her gender. Highlighting the plight of black women, she wrote: "What I'm experiencing is Jane Crow."

In the legal career that followed, Murray made enormous strides in the fight against racial and gender discrimination. In the early 1940s, she bet her Howard professor $10 that Jim Crow would be overturned in 25 years; the process began in a little over a decade, thanks in no small part to her arguments of the unconstitutionality of 'separate but equal' being utilised in the Supreme Court case Brown v Board of Education in 1954. Her book *States' Laws on Race and Color* (1950) was described as "the bible for civil rights lawyers".

Murray's interpretation of the 14th Amendment – not to "deny to any *person*... the equal protection of the laws" – then inspired another landmark Supreme Court case, in 1971, for women's rights. She fought publicly for equality, while fighting privately for her own identity in the face of what one biographer called a sense of "inbetweenness".

PUSHING AGAINST BOUNDARIES

Murray's strong-willed character had been evident from an early age. Although born with African-American, white and Native American heritage on 20 November 1910, Anna Pauline Murray grew up as 'coloured' in the South. An orphan by the time she was 12, she was raised by relatives in North Carolina, and – with the support of her aunt, Pauline – she enjoyed a freedom of expression not commonly afforded one of her race and gender. The extremely self-motivated Murray then moved to New York at 16 to get a better education, graduating in English in 1933 from the all-women's Hunter College.

Pauli Murray pictured in 1946, two years after graduating top of her law class at the prestigious Howard University

In the North she hoped to be free of Jim Crow's grip too, but in 1940 she was arrested for not moving to the back of a bus, much like Rosa Parks 15 years later. The incident lit a fire in her to take up civil rights law in the first place. By then Murray faced, as well as discrimination, a deeply personal form of inbetweenness that caused much confusion and distress, and yet instilled in her a need to push against societal boundaries: she was gender nonconforming.

While always referring to herself as 'she/her', Murray went by the gender-neutral name Pauli, dressed in men's clothing, and was attracted, in her own words, to "extremely feminine and heterosexual women". Despite a brief marriage to a man in 1930, she became convinced she was "a girl who should have been a boy". Travelling the Depression-hit US in the 1930s, working a heap of jobs, she hopped trains pretending to be a man, calling herself "the dude" or "Pete".

When denied a postgraduate place at Harvard, she wrote a reply saying: "I would gladly change my sex to meet your requirements". Indeed, Murray spoke to many doctors about hormone treatments and to request surgical investigation for male sexual organs in her body, all to no avail. As such, she regularly suffered from bouts of depression to the point of routine hospitalisation.

Yet Murray was able to direct her frustrations, determination and fierce intellect into ending Jim and Jane Crow. She began pouring her feelings and activism into writing, dubbed "confrontation by typewriter", and produced poetry and autobiographies. Her letters even made a friend out of the first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. As a lawyer, Murray practised in California and New York – during which time she formed a long-time relationship with a woman named Irene Barlow – and saw her legal arguments used in Brown v Board of Education, making segregation in schools unconstitutional.

FROM COURT TO CHURCH

Simply, Murray's achievements are too many to elucidate: in the 1960s alone, she was a founding member of the National Organisation of Women; spent time in Ghana working at a law school; became the first African-American to receive a doctorate in law from Yale; was appointed vice president of Benedict College, South Carolina; and made a law professor at Brandeis University, Massachusetts, where she taught for five years.

In 1971, Ruth Bader Ginsberg – the future Supreme Court justice – named Murray in her brief on her landmark gender discrimination case, Reed v Reed, for her basis that the 14th Amendment guaranteed equal protection of the law to any "person". Then, quite suddenly, Murray left law and turned her attention to being a spiritual leader, becoming the first African-American woman to be ordained an Episcopalian priest. Now she is one of the church's saints.

Murray died of pancreatic cancer on 1 July 1985, aged 74. A phrase often used by historians, writers and activists about her is that she was 'ahead of her time' – so much so that she has often been out of sight of history.

WORDS: JONNY WILKES

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X1

"Murray fought publicly for equality, while fighting privately for her own identity in the face of what one biographer called a sense of 'inbetweenness'..."

Murray spent the final years of her life serving as an Episcopalian priest in Washington DC, having been ordained in January 1977 at the age of 66

RIGHT: **Protesters hailing from different US states hold a joint protest against segregation, c1950. Fighting the racist Jim Crow Laws would be a key focus of Murray's early legal career**

FAR RIGHT: **A crowd gathers to mark 25 years since the 1954 Supreme Court case Brown v Board of Education, which had declared segregation in US public schools to be unconstitutional**

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

BBC HISTORY REVEALED

HRP117

Please complete the order form and send to:
FREEPOST IMMEDIATE MEDIA (please write in capitals)

You may photocopy this form

UK DIRECT DEBIT

☐ I would like to subscribe by Direct Debit and **pay just £35.75 every 13 issues** *(please complete the form below)* **SAVE 50%**

YOUR DETAILS (ESSENTIAL)

Title _____ Forename _____

Surname _____

Address _____

_____

_____ Postcode _____

Home phone no _____

Mobile tel no _____

Email _____

☐ **I wish to purchase a gift subscription** (please supply gift recipient's name and address on a separate sheet)

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

DIRECT Debit

To: the Manager (Bank/Building Society)

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch sort code

Reference number (internal use only)

Originator's identification number

4 5 3 5 6 1

Please pay Immediate Media Co London Ltd Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Immediate Media Co London Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank / Building Society.

Signature

Date / /

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debt mandates from some types of account

KEEP IN TOUCH

BBC History Revealed (published by Immediate Media Company Limited) would like to send you updates, special offers and promotions by email. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Please tick here if you would like to receive these ☐

We would also like to keep in touch by post and telephone about other relevant offers and promotions from Immediate Media. If you do not wish to be contacted this way please tick here post ☐ phone ☐. For more information about how to change the way we contact you, and how we hold your personal information, please see our privacy policy which can be viewed online at *immediate.co.uk/privacy-policy*.

OTHER PAYMENT METHODS

☐ **UK cheque/credit/debit card** – £49.99 for 13 issues **SAVE 30%**

☐ **Europe** inc Eire – €68 for 13 issues

☐ **USA** – $65 for 13 issues ☐ **Rest of World** – $70 for 13 issues

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Immediate Media Co Ltd. for £ _____

Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐

☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

Issue no. ☐☐ Valid from ☐☐☐☐ Expiry date ☐☐☐☐

Signature _____ Date _____

OVERSEAS Please complete the order form and send to:
BBC History Revealed, PO Box 3320, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton NN4 7BF

~~£5.50~~
SUBSCRIBERS PAY JUST
£2.75
PER ISSUE

HISTORY EXTRA

Medieval
Notre-Dame | 10 facts about Paris's famous cathedral
General History
Quiz of the week | Which athlete won four gold medals at the 1936

FREE ACCESS

PLUS

As a subscriber to *BBC History Revealed*, you'll now get **FREE access to HistoryExtra.com**. Read thousands of features written by historians; watch on-demand video lectures; download an exciting range of special edition digital magazines; listen to ad-free podcasts including an exclusive new Tutankhamun series; **and much more!**

Your special subscriber offer:

- **13 issues for £35.75* – PRICE LOCKED** for the whole year!
- **FREE access to HistoryExtra.com worth £34.99****
- **FREE UK delivery** direct to your door
- **Never miss an issue** of our action packed magazine, suitable for all the family

Hurry! Offer ends 15 February 2023

* 50% saving is available to UK Direct Debit orders only. Your subscription will start with the next available issue. Offer ends 15 February 2023.

** Your HistoryExtra.com access will continue to be free as part of your magazine subscription and will come to an end if you decide to cancel your print subscription at any time.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER

Save 50%*

when you subscribe to *BBC History Revealed*

PLUS enjoy free access to HistoryExtra.com worth £34.99!**

GETTY IMAGES

SCAN THIS TO ORDER NOW

or VISIT **www.buysubscriptions.com/HRP117**

or CALL **03330 162 115**+ quoting HRP117

+ UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed-line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). Outside of free call packages, call charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open Monday to Friday 9am–5pm. Overseas readers call +44 1604 973 723

SURPRISING FACTS

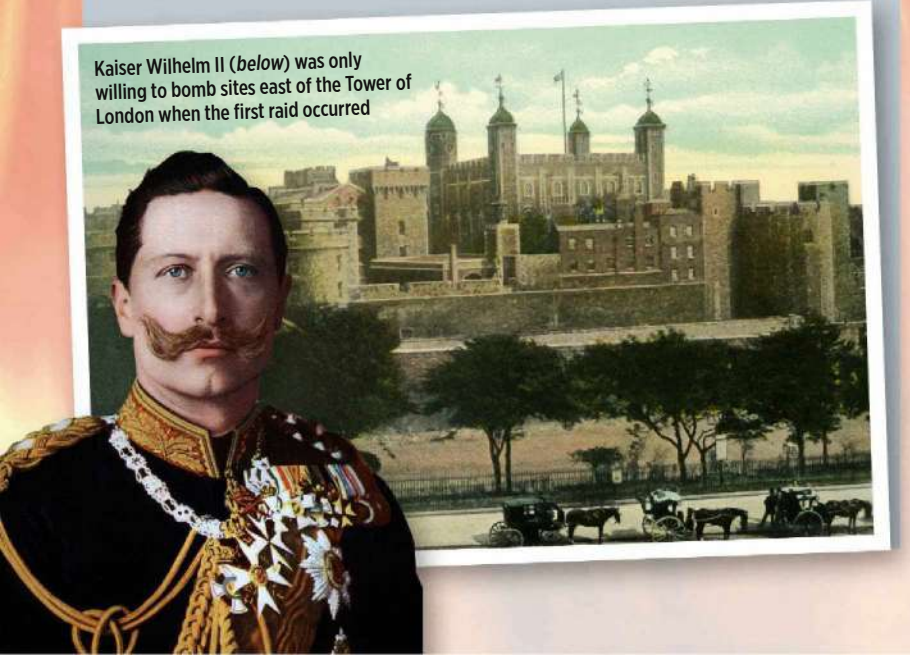
9 THINGS YOU (PROBABLY) DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT LONDON'S FIRST ZEPPELIN RAID

The beams of a searchlight rise from London's Embankment. Unfortunately it appears that no searchlights were in action on the night of the 31 May raid

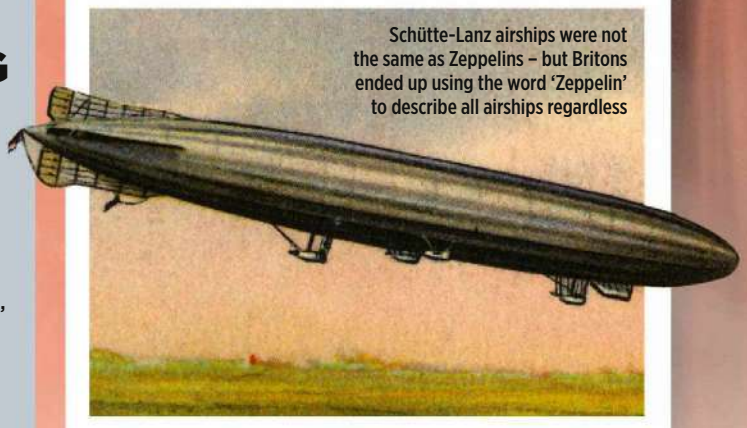
Ian Castle shares nine fascinating facts about the night of 31 May 1915, when Britain's capital suffered its first attack by a German airship

1 KAISER WILHELM II WAITED NINE MONTHS BEFORE DECIDING TO LAUNCH THE RAID

Following the outbreak of World War I in the summer of 1914, some people had expected Zeppelins to appear over Britain almost immediately, but most of the airships available at that time were either not up to the task or were required elsewhere. In addition, the German emperor – Kaiser Wilhelm II – initially vetoed the demands of the military to attack Britain by air. With his close ties to the British royal family and, believing like many that the war would soon be over, he did not want to be held responsible for destroying London's cultural heritage. As pressure mounted on him, and more Zeppelins became available, the Kaiser finally approved the bombing of England in January 1915. But he continued to exclude London until May of that year, when he approved bombing east of the Tower of London. In July 1915, that approval extended to the whole of London.



Kaiser Wilhelm II (*below*) was only willing to bomb sites east of the Tower of London when the first raid occurred



Schütte-Lanz airships were not the same as Zeppelins – but Britons ended up using the word 'Zeppelin' to describe all airships regardless

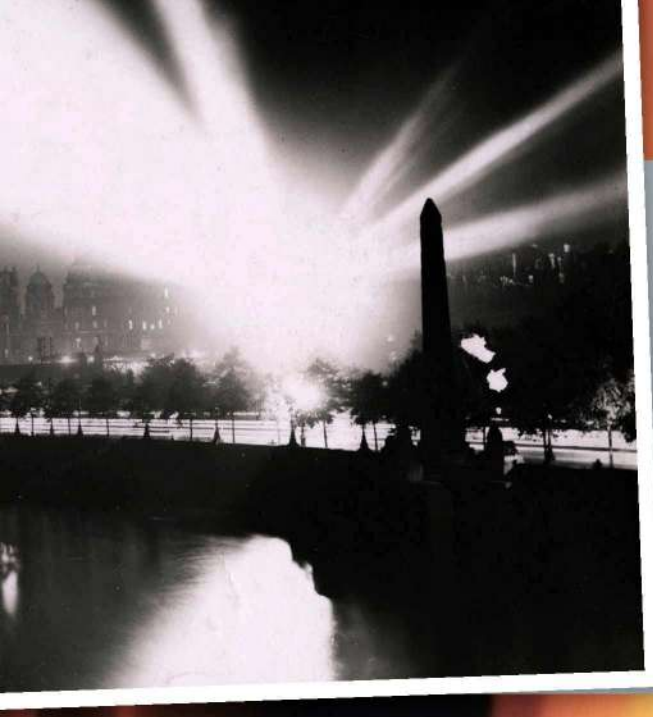
2 ZEPPELINS WERE NOT THE ONLY AIRSHIPS TO ATTACK BRITAIN

The German military used two types of airship to raid Britain. Zeppelin airships had a rigid aluminium framework (and later, duralumin – an alloy largely of aluminium and copper), within which were held a number of separate gasbags, each containing inflammable hydrogen lifting gas. An outer skin of linen, known as the envelope, then covered the whole structure.

Suspended below the framework were capsules known as gondolas, which contained the control room, the crew and the engines that drove the propellers. Zeppelins employed machine guns for defence and carried a varying bomb load.

The other type of airship, used to a lesser extent, was the Schütte-Lanz. This differed from the Zeppelin in that its framework was made of wood and not metal, but to the British people all German airships were simply known as 'Zeppelins'.

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X2



Churchill served as First Lord of the Admiralty between 1911 and 1915 – a role that he would also hold during the first few months of World War II

3 CHURCHILL WAS IN CHARGE OF THE CAPITAL'S AIR DEFENCE

In 1914 the army and the Royal Navy had separate air arms: the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). The RFC accompanied the army to France, leaving future prime minister Winston Churchill – as First Lord of the Admiralty – to accept responsibility for London's air defence.

At the outbreak of war, London had no guns for aerial defence, but positioned three in Whitehall a few days later. By May 1915 London had 16 guns defending it, but half of these were small, 1-pdr guns, considered "useless and dangerous" by the man who took over responsibility for them in September 1915. In addition, the RNAS had a number of aircraft positioned in southeast England as part of the London defences.

An illustration by German artist Felix Schwormstädt shows LZ.38's control room

4 GERMANY'S ARMY AND NAVY POSSESSED THEIR OWN AIRSHIP FLEETS

There was a rivalry between the two services vying to be first to strike against London. The race was won by the army when Zeppelin LZ.38 appeared over the capital. It was a new Zeppelin; its first flight took place in early April 1915.

Commanded by 35-year-old Hauptmann Erich Linnarz, it had already flown four other raids on Britain before striking London. LZ.38 had a crew of 13, was 536 feet in length, could fly at about 50mph – wind permitting – and carried 120 bombs weighing about 1.5 tonnes in total, the majority being of an incendiary type.

LZ.38 appeared over north London shortly after 11pm on 31 May 1915. Because of their great size, all Zeppelin raids took place at night, making it harder for the defending guns and aircraft to locate them.

5 THE FIRST BOMBS LANDED IN STOKE NEWINGTON

Zeppelin LZ.38 approached London at a height approaching two miles, and was not attempting to hit specific targets – the purpose was simply to bomb the capital while keeping to a line east of the Tower of London.

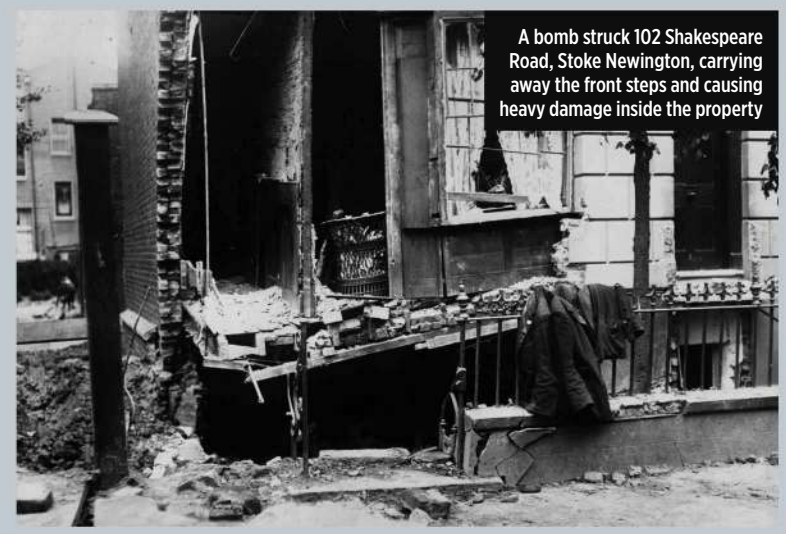
The first bomb, an incendiary, landed on 16 Alkham Road, the home of Albert Lovell, a 39-year-old clerk, and his family, setting fire to the upper floor of the house. Mr Lovell alerted the fire brigade, who extinguished the blaze before it caused too much damage.

Hackney Borough Council erected a plaque in the 1990s to commemorate this first bomb, but unfortunately placed it near the corner of Nevill Road and Osterley Road – more than half a mile away. This was rectified in time for the centenary of the raid in May 2015, with the old plaque removed and a new one added to the correct address.

ABOVE: A shoe factory sits gutted by fire as a result of the deadly 31 May raid

LEFT: Two young Londoners recover in hospital following a different 1915 attack

A drawing published in the *Daily Chronicle* shows a soldier shaking his fist at an airship, vowing to seek revenge for the fatal raid



A bomb struck 102 Shakespeare Road, Stoke Newington, carrying away the front steps and causing heavy damage inside the property

6 A MUSIC HALL AND A WHISKY WAREHOUSE WERE DAMAGED IN THE ATTACK

After LZ.38 had finished bombing Stoke Newington, bombs were then dropped on Dalston, Hoxton, Shoreditch, Spitalfields, Whitechapel and Stepney, followed by one on Stratford and finally Leytonstone. The biggest of the 41 fires reported that night occurred in Hoxton, where at least two cabinetmakers' premises were gutted.

Most damage occurred to private dwellings, but bombs also struck the Shoreditch Empire Music Hall during a performance and smashed through the glass roof of the Great Eastern Railway's Bishopsgate Goods Yard. In Whitechapel, bombs damaged a church, a synagogue and a bonded warehouse full of Johnnie Walker's whisky.

7 ONE OF THE SEVEN VICTIMS WAS JUST THREE YEARS OLD

The first death occurred in Cowper Road, Stoke Newington, where three-year-old Elsie Leggett burnt to death. Her father had rescued his four other children from the flames, but in the confusion believed a neighbour had taken Elsie to safety. Sadly that was not true, and her charred body was later discovered in the wreckage. Tragically for the family, their 11-year-old daughter, Elizabeth May, also died a few days later from her burns.

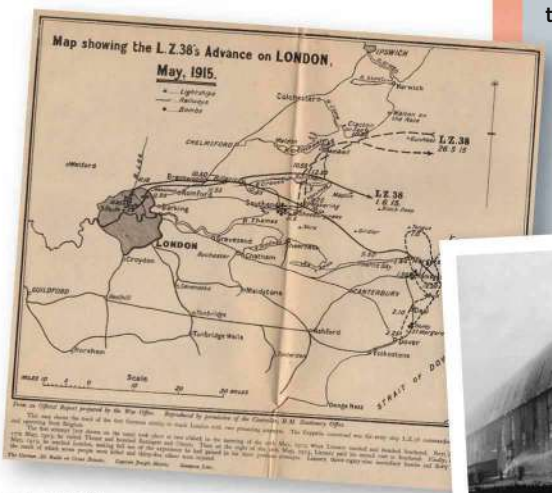
In Balls Pond Road, Dalston, Henry and Caroline Good were unable to escape from a fire caused by an incendiary bomb, and died in their bedroom. Eleanor Willis, a 67-year-old woman living alone in Southgate Grove, died three days later, her death being attributed to shock brought on by the raid. And in Christian Street, Whitechapel, an explosive bomb killed Leah Lehrman, aged 16, and eight-year-old Samuel Reuben.

8 THE ZEPPELIN HAD REMAINED ALMOST ENTIRELY UNSEEN

The police only received a warning of the approaching Zeppelin a few minutes before the raid began, with an official report later stating that it was so high that "there is no authentic case of anyone having been able to see it during its passage over London."

There was, however, one witness: Sub-Inspector Locking of the Special Constabulary briefly spotted the airship as it passed over Stoke Newington.

In total, the RNAS launched 15 aircraft to intercept LZ.38, but only one pilot was able to see it, and he was forced down by engine failure before he could attack. Another pilot, Flight Lieutenant Douglas Barnes, tragically died when his aircraft crashed on landing.



ABOVE: **A map produced by the War Office reveals LZ.38's path of destruction**

RIGHT: **The Zeppelin was destroyed a week later during a British raid on its shed in Evère, Belgium**

9 THE RAID TRIGGERED ANTI-GERMAN RIOTS

Hordes of sightseers descended on the areas that had suffered in the bombing to see the damage for themselves. Anti-German rioting also broke out in the bombed areas, with mobs looting shops whose owners had German-sounding names.

The raider, Zeppelin LZ.38, was about to suffer too. A week after the attack on London it set out on another raid, but engine problems forced it to return early to its home base at Evère, near Brussels. That night, two British aircraft based in France successfully attacked Evère. Their exploding bombs ignited LZ.38's highly inflammable hydrogen, creating a roaring inferno.

In the morning, all that remained of the first London raider was a twisted heap of smouldering red-hot girders. But others would soon take its place. The last Zeppelin bombs fell on London on the night of 19 October 1917.

IAN CASTLE is the author of several books on Germany's air raids on Britain during World War I, including *Zeppelin Onslaught: The Forgotten Blitz, 1914–1915* (Frontline Books, 2018) and *Zeppelin Inferno: The Forgotten Blitz, 1916* (Frontline Books, 2022). For more information, visit *iancastlezeppelin.co.uk*

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X3, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS X1

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

THE BLACK DEATH

PODCAST

For a range of podcasts on the Black Death, including a new, six-part series on the topic, visit *historyextra.com/podcast*

Explore the story behind the devastating plague that shook the medieval world

28 Everything you wanted to know about the Black Death
Professor John Hatcher answers key questions about the global spread, symptoms and long-term impact of the plague

34 The shadow of death descends
Originating in Asia, the plague ravaged Europe – and people were helpless to stop it spreading

38 Grief and desperation
The Black Death triggered untold panic, causing people to desert their loved ones and seek out scapegoats

41 Going into lockdown
Helen Carr explores the measures used across the centuries to curb the spread of the deadliest disease in human history

44 Doctor's orders
As plague swept the globe, medieval doctors recommended a range of preventative measures and 'cures'

46 Punishment from on high
An unshakeable certainty that the plague was God's punishment for sin led to desperate, and terrible, measures

48 Opinion
Professor John Hatcher shares his thoughts on the history of Black Death research, and what secrets are yet to be discovered

49 Get hooked
From books to podcasts, we reveal our pick of the best Black Death resources to check out next

HISTORICAL CONSULTANT FOR THIS MONTH'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE

JOHN HATCHER
is emeritus professor of economic and social history at the University of Cambridge and the author of numerous books, including *The Black Death: An Intimate History* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2008)

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE BLACK DEATH

Professor John Hatcher answers keys questions about the global spread, symptoms and long-term impact of plague

Q: When did the Black Death start and end?

A: The Great Pestilence is thought to have started in 1346 in the high steppes of Mongolia or eastern China. It then went on a massive circuit of the known world, moving largely eastwards and southwards, across the Mediterranean, working its way down into north Africa, and up through Italy and Spain. In England it arrived in Dorset in the summer of 1348. By the end of 1349 it had spread throughout the rest of England and Ireland and into Scotland. Thereafter the plague moved northwards into Scandinavia and then eastwards, arriving in Russia in 1352–53. In just seven years it had traversed the whole of the known world.

The plague spread at two speeds, moving at its fastest as it was carried long distances across the sea, but much more slowly as it made its way across land. The relentless progress of the Black Death across England has been carefully tracked through an abundance of local records, which show that the length of time the plague stayed in any community depended on its size, with deaths from plague occurring for no more than three months in the average village, although for appreciably longer in large towns and cities, before dwindling and finally ceasing. This first and most ferocious wave of plague had disappeared from England by late 1349, but the same disease returned with a major visitation in 1361–62, and again and again, albeit with slowly diminishing force and contracting scale, for the ensuing decades and centuries.

Death, represented in the form of a skeleton riding a horse, picks off his victims in this 15th-century fresco. Medieval society was decimated by bubonic plague, a disease that would regularly return for centuries to come

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X1

Q: What was the death rate?

A: The death rate in the population as a whole – not just among those who caught it – seems to have averaged around 50 per cent. A generally accepted figure for Europe's population at this time is 80 million, which means that around 40 million people may have died in the Black Death. Left untreated, bubonic plague leaves victims with a two-thirds chance of dying, but nowadays, when successfully diagnosed, it is easily treatable with antibiotics.

Q: How did the Black Death get its name?

A: We don't know for sure. What we do know is that when the Greeks and the Romans dealt with disastrous diseases, they tended to call them 'black', meaning horrific and terrible. So it was just a negative connotation. And that seems the most likely explanation. But the other explanation – and the two needn't be mutually exclusive – is that bubonic plague causes a necrosis in the skin. So it was black in that sense as well.

It was only in the 17th century that the plague started to be referred to as the Black Death. At the time of the plague and in the 14th and 15th centuries, the disease was referred to as the Great Pestilence, or the Great Plague.

Q: What were the symptoms of the Black Death?

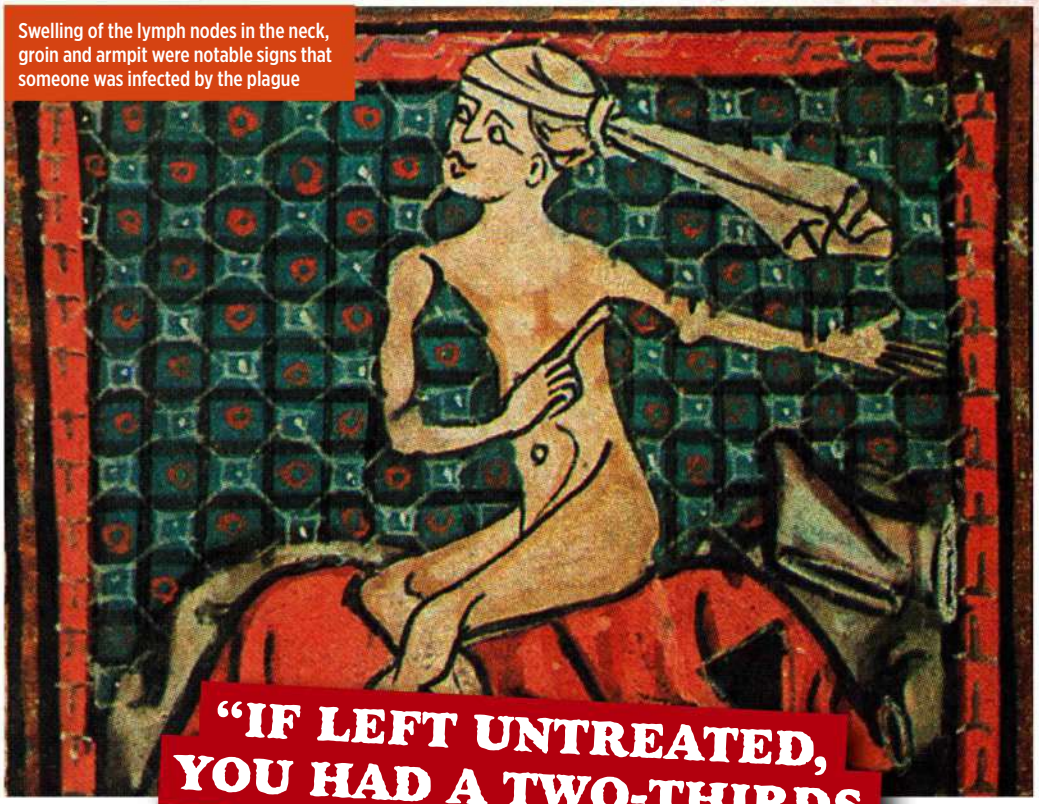
A: Many descriptions written by expert observers who lived through the Black Death report symptoms that accord closely with those typically suffered by victims of bubonic plague, which include general malaise, fever, headaches, chills, weakness and abdominal pain; the distinctive swelling of the lymph nodes in the neck, armpit or groin, close to where the bacteria first enters the body from the bite of the infected insect; and then bleeding under the skin and from the mouth, nose and rectum, as well as the blackening of the nose, fingers and toes. The first symptoms usually appear within two to eight days of infection, and in the great majority of untreated cases death occurs within seven days of symptoms appearing.

Contemporaries also describe two lesser variants of bubonic plague, which fit very well with the symptoms of pneumonic plague and septicemic plague. In the first, the main symptoms are confined to the lungs and lead to the coughing of copious amounts of blood, soon followed by sudden death; in the second, the blood of the victim is overwhelmed with bacteria and they die with little or no warning.

Q: Do we know for sure that it was bubonic plague?

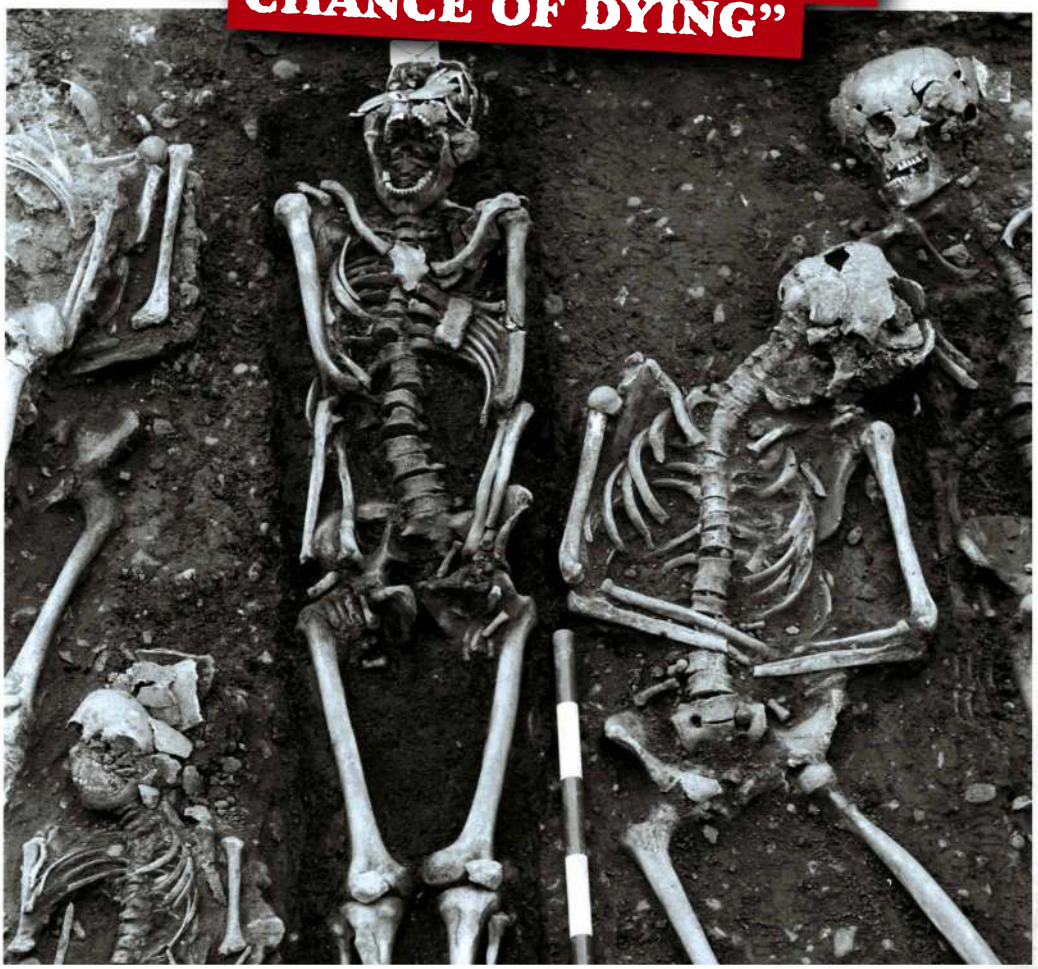
A: Yes, it was definitely plague, and primarily the bubonic form of the disease. Since the late 19th century, these epidemics have been known to have been caused by a bacterium, *Yersinia pestis*, and thought to have been spread through the bites of infected fleas that abandoned their normal hosts, black rats, when they died.

From the 1970s, however, a succession of scientists and historians began to express doubts about whether the Black Death could actually have been a pandemic of plague, questioning how the death rate could have got anywhere near the levels recorded in the mid-1340s if every victim had to have been bitten by an infected flea. With pneumonic and septicemic plague less widespread and causing far fewer deaths than bubonic plague, the problem is explaining how a disease that spread in such a mechanical manner could have killed around half of the world's population within such a short space of time. So the view began to prevail that the Black Death had to have been primarily caused by a disease that had the capacity to spread much easier than the non-motile bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. Various fanciful suggestions

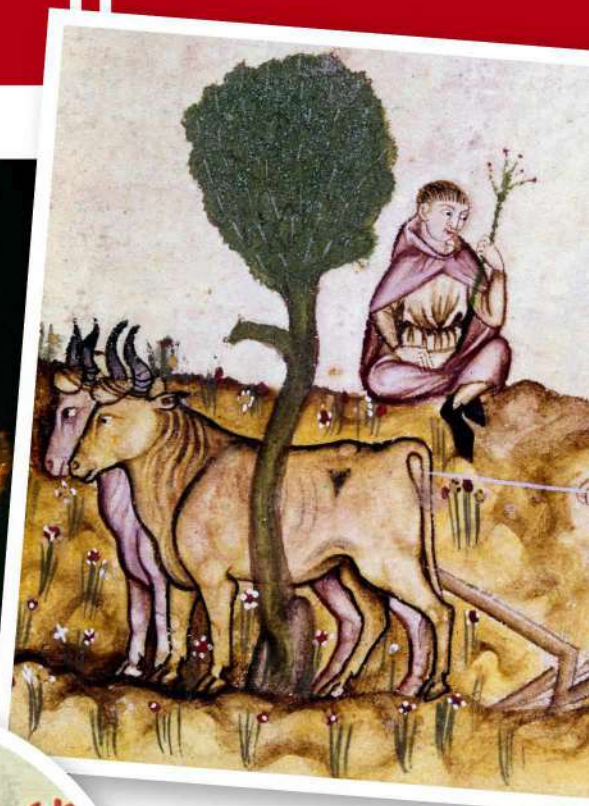


Swelling of the lymph nodes in the neck, groin and armpit were notable signs that someone was infected by the plague

"IF LEFT UNTREATED, YOU HAD A TWO-THIRDS CHANCE OF DYING"



Mass burial sites were created to deal with the high death toll, notably at East Smithfield, London, where these remains were excavated



"THE GENETIC MAKE-UP OF SOME PEOPLE COULD HAVE MADE THEM LESS SUSCEPTIBLE"

have been made as to what such a disease might have been, with viruses prominent candidates.

I objected to these propositions primarily because plague victims display very distinctive symptoms, described in detail by those who experienced the Black Death first-hand, which do not fit any of the suggested alternative diseases. Contemporaries did not know the causative agent and how it was transmitted to victims, but they were capable of observing the symptoms experienced by victims, and from their accounts it had to have been plague.

Explaining how *Yersinia pestis* was transmitted to humans on a scale that could have caused the massive mortalities suffered across the world in the Black Death and later epidemics remains a puzzle. One view that has gained recent support is that instead of concentrating solely on rats and their fleas, the deadly bacterium could also have been effectively carried by a range of ectoparasites, including human fleas; in the last few years, head and body lice, which infested the bodies, clothes and beds of most medieval people, have been shown in laboratories to be capable of transmitting plague. Undoubtedly a host of elements exceptionally favourable to the dissemination of *Yersinia pestis* among human populations must have combined to cause such horrendous loss of life. Human lice may well form part of a plausible explanation, but this is far from being unanimously accepted. There is still much that we do not know.

Q: Were some people immune to the disease?

A: So huge was the mortality caused by the Black Death that it begs the question of how anyone survived. Part of the answer is that some survivors simply avoided coming into close proximity to sources of infection. This was especially the case with the rich, who could afford to flee when plague threatened, isolating themselves in stone buildings. Indeed, records show that the death rate among the nobility and gentry was substantially lower than average. However, it is also evident that the genetic make-up of some people could have made them less susceptible, in the same way that, for example, some people are far less likely to catch tuberculosis when exposed to it than others. Historical accounts of the plague tell of individuals who survived unscathed in households where almost everyone else died. Significantly, recent studies of the DNA extracted from the remains of more than 500 victims and survivors of the plague have shown that those who had a 'good' variant of the ERAP2 gene were 40 per cent more likely to have survived.

LEFT: **A close-up image of a rat flea (*Xenopsylla cheopis*) that has been infected with plague bacteria**

CENTRE: **An illustration of a photomicrograph showing *Yersinia pestis* – the bacterium that caused the Black Death**

RIGHT: **A 13th-century illumination depicts two farmers with their animals. Working with livestock meant farmers were sometimes more aware of how diseases could spread from the sick to the healthy**

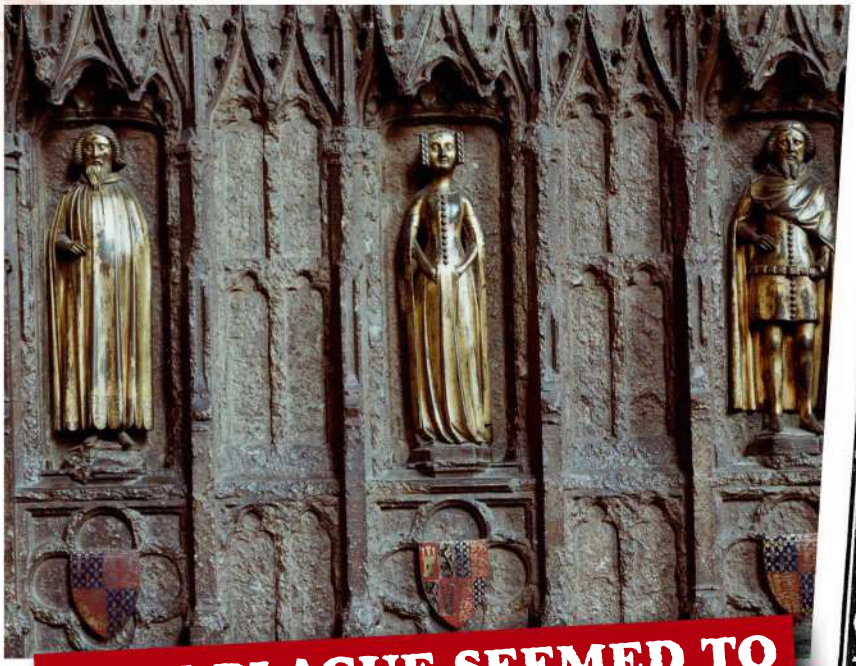
Q: What advice was given to medieval people regarding the plague?

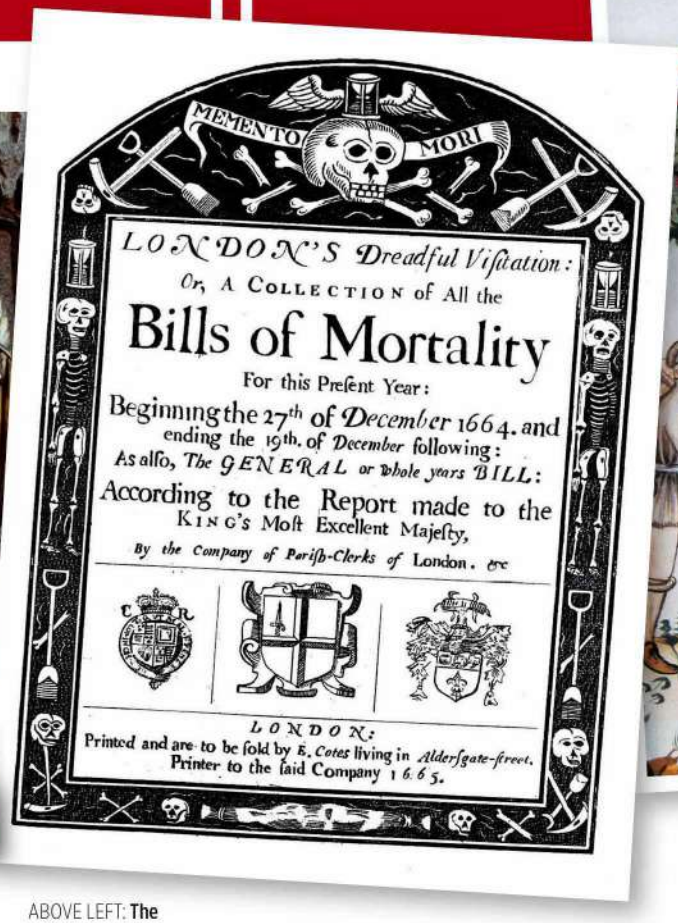
A: One of the most common theories of the time was that the plague was carried as an invisible miasmic cloud, blown hither and thither by the wind and thus providing an explanation of why it was proving impossible to stop its spread into cities, towns and villages. Physicians commonly believed that people became infected through the pores in the skin, so they advised against anything that caused these pores to open up and allow penetration by the disease, such as eating hot, spicy foods, bathing, and engaging in strenuous physical activity.

Cures for those who had caught the plague did not exist, but the best advice given for avoiding the disease was to steer clear of other people and to run away as fast and as far as you could if the plague was heading to your area. But medical authorities could not satisfactorily explain why this should be done. For the common people, keeping away from others and shunning the sick

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X2

A 16th-century German woodcut shows a physician attempting to treat a plague victim – likely in vain




MEMENTO MORI
LONDON'S Dreadful Visitation:
Or, A COLLECTION of All the
Bills of Mortality
For this Present Year:
Beginning the 27th of December 1664. and ending the 19th. of December following:
As also, The GENERAL or Whole years BILL:
According to the Report made to the KING'S Most Excellent Majesty,
By the Company of Parish-Clerks of London, &c
LONDON:
Printed and are to be sold by E. Cotes living in Alderſgate-ſtreet, Printer to the ſaid Company 1665.

"THE PLAGUE SEEMED TO KILL PEOPLE REGARDLESS OF THEIR WEALTH, FITNESS AND AGE"

ABOVE LEFT: **The tomb of Edward III features statuettes of his children, including Joan (*centre*), who died of plague in 1348**

ABOVE RIGHT: **A collection of Bills of Mortality spanning the dates 27 December 1664 to 19 December 1665, when plague had struck London again**

was simple common sense. Farmers sometimes had more idea about the transmission of diseases than famous physicians, because they were used to dealing with livestock and had seen the advantages of separating the sick from the healthy.

Q: Was there a significant class and gender divide regarding those who contracted it?

A: The disease struck both rich and poor: a daughter of King Edward III, the reigning monarch, died from the plague when she was about 14. She had been betrothed to Peter of Castile and had travelled to Bordeaux before the plague hit England – she caught it in France and died from it, along with several of her courtiers. But in general, the rich seem to have suffered less. The rich people we can measure precisely are the barons and the nobles of England, because of the records they left: if they died, they had to have a record of their death, and their inheritance passed through the courts. So we know exactly how many of them died and the death rate for this class was about 22 per cent – about half that of the population at large. The reason for this, I think, is that they could flee in the face of the plague whilst ordinary people would have been driven out of whatever village they had fled to and would have had no real means of supporting themselves away from home. Another reason is that wealthy people tended to live more in stone dwellings and have servants in the kitchens and storerooms where the rats would have been.

But interestingly, in the second outbreak, which came in 1361–62, the rich suffered the same as everybody else, possibly because they hadn't been exposed to the disease before. But it doesn't appear that it was a disease that favoured the rich per se, or those who were well fed. Health didn't seem to come into it; the plague seemed to kill people regardless of their wealth, fitness and age.

There have also been studies made of burial grounds and an analysis of the age distribution of victims. And it seems that it wasn't a disease that discriminated in the way that, for example, the present coronavirus does, which is very heavily weighted against the elderly, almost rising vertically once you get beyond about 65. The rich tended to fare better with the Black Death, but for reasons that were not connected with the disease. They were able to escape and isolate themselves more easily. But they were still hit very hard.

Regarding gender, it seemed to hit women and men at the same level. By the 17th century, London Bills of Mortality – drawn up each time plague hit the city – were in use, and they provide a breakdown of age and sex. At that time it seemed to switch: one plague outbreak might hit women more than men, but the next outbreak might reverse that. But the evidence suggests that there wasn't a huge difference in the death rates for men and women.

Q: What were the long-term impacts of the plague?

A: Well, when I was reading history at university, the view was that the Black Death, despite killing millions of people, didn't have that much of an effect in the long term. We've now swung back to giving the Black Death, along with the later epidemics, and the subsequent collapse of the population, a very considerable weight in the long term.

Medieval societies were overwhelmingly rural, and they had grown substantially in size in the centuries before the Black Death, with many countries believed to have become severely overpopulated. Thus, when the plague scythed through these swollen populations, the immediate result was beneficial for the majority, with more land per head and a scarcity of people to farm it or to work for others. This reduced the value of land and increased that of labour, thereby creating

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X2

LEFT: Many wealthy people fled as plague advanced on their homes, isolating themselves in stone houses away from the storerooms and kitchens where rats would have lurked

An illustration depicts medieval peasants sowing and cultivating a patch of land. The plague contributed to a decisive shift in power between landowners and workers

pressure for falling rents and rising living standards and wages. This created massive tensions in the prevailing social structures, in which the wealth and power of the lords and gentry primarily stemmed from their possession of extensive landed estates and the control they were able to exert over the peasantry, including maintaining a system of serfdom which bound many to the land.

The impact the Black Death had on history has long been a major source of debate. The latest view is that in England the scarcity of people led to an acceleration in the decline of serfdom and the whole feudal system. In part, these systems had been maintained by the common law and the power of lords, but much more by the fact that the population, at a level that would not be exceeded until the mid-17th century at the earliest, kept land scarce and in great demand. Under such conditions tenants clung onto their holdings and paid the rents and other dues that were asked of them. But the sudden death of a third, or more probably a half, of the population massively upset this balance of power, as the bulk of people suddenly found themselves having the potential to greatly improve the quality of their lives, while the rich faced a struggle to enforce the old rules and customs.

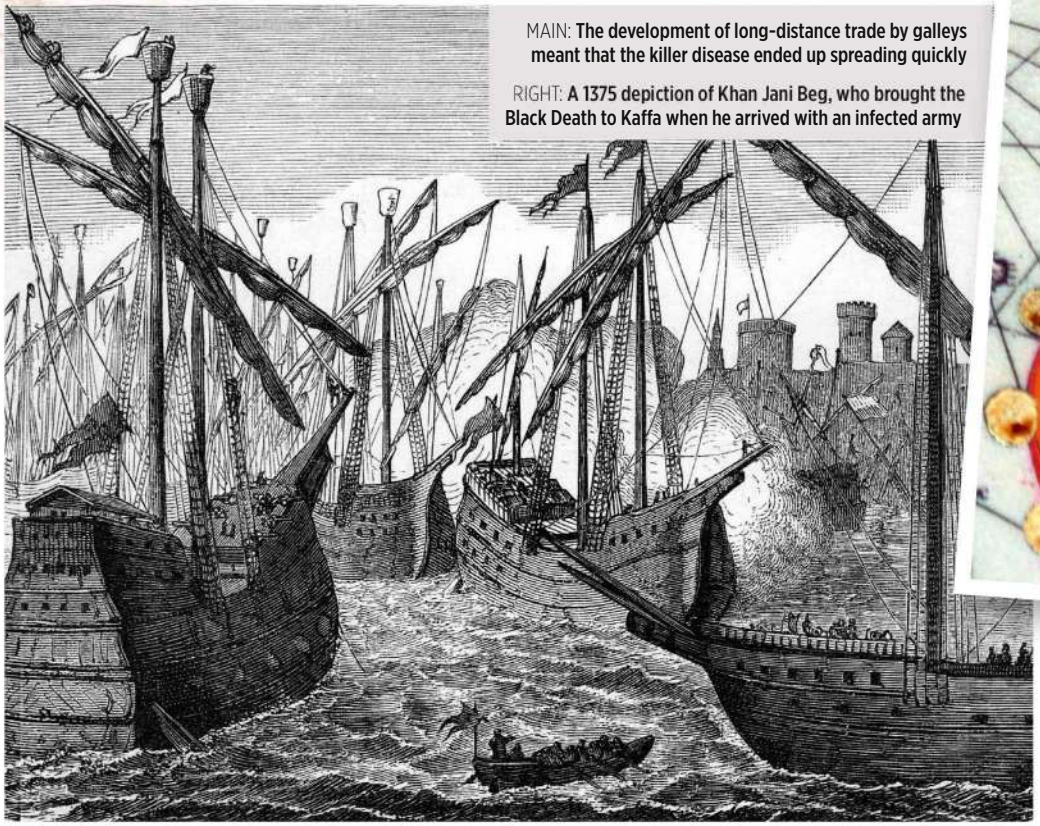
In England, economic realities tended to triumph quickly, as most lords made substantial concessions at an early date in order to keep their lands occupied, and most employers were forced to pay higher wages in order to attract sufficient workers. In particular, the powers of landlords were restricted by the scattered nature of their estates, which generally consisted of individual manors distributed widely across a number of counties. Because of this, maintaining their authority and incomes by preventing tenants from deserting their holdings and seeking better conditions elsewhere was never a feasible long-term solution.

This was the dominant process across much of Europe, but in some parts the opposite occurred, especially to the east, where lords who had greater authority and dominated whole regions were able to maintain or even increase the harshness of their regimes through the exercise of sheer force.

Inevitably, the scale of the Black Death and later plagues ensured that its impact was felt far beyond the economic sphere in the Middle Ages, and lively debates continue around its influence on religious beliefs and practices; on the theory and practice of medicine; on art and architecture; on shortages of labour leading to advances in technology; and much more besides, including recently, and contentiously, whether plague provided the major driving force behind the rise of Europe in the global world.

INTERVIEW: DAVE MUSGROVE

JOHN HATCHER is emeritus professor of economic and social history at the University of Cambridge. His books include *The Black Death: An Intimate History* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008)



MAIN: **The development of long-distance trade by galleys meant that the killer disease ended up spreading quickly**

RIGHT: **A 1375 depiction of Khan Jani Beg, who brought the Black Death to Kaffa when he arrived with an infected army**

THE SHADOW OF DEATH DESCENDS

Originating in eastern or central Asia, plague ravaged Europe – and people were helpless to stop it spreading

"There seemed to be no cure. There was such a fear that no one seemed to know what to do. When it took hold in a house, it often happened that no one remained who had not died." This observation by the Florentine chronicler and statesman, the Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, encapsulates the sense of complete helplessness that pervaded all the regions under siege from the Black Death in the mid-14th century, the most catastrophic pandemic in human history. The world had never seen anything like it before, and medieval society was utterly unequipped to deal with the spread.

Now proven to have been caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*, passed from the fleas on rats to humans, the killer plague had its origins in either eastern or central Asia in 1346. The following year, it was transported aboard ships carrying the army of Jani Beg, the khan of the Golden Horde, as he attacked the Genoese-held port of Kaffa (now Feodosiya) in the Crimea. There were even reports of the corpses of Jani Beg's men who had succumbed to the disease being catapulted over the city walls in an attempt to infect the locals. This might sound fanciful and far-fetched, but the Golden Horde's landing in the Crimea provided a route for the plague to decimate the populations of western Eurasia and north Africa.

From Kaffa, the rapid spread tends to be attributed to Genoese ships making a hasty retreat – more specifically, the unofficial passengers on board: fleas living on rats. With these ships sailing in all directions and arriving at multiple destinations, the plague-ridden fleas and their rodent carriers were soon at ports all around the Mediterranean Basin. When the ships docked on the Italian peninsula, at Constantinople or along the north African coast, the disease docked with them.

DID YOU KNOW?

MESS IN MESSINA

In October 1347, a dozen trading galleys from the Black Sea arrived at the Sicilian port of Messina, with most of the crew dead or dying. One account of this early evidence of the Black Death in Europe describes "sickness clinging to their very bones".

SEEKING THE SOURCE

It would not be for half a millennium after the Black Death pandemic, in the late 19th century, that the initial transmission of the plague bacterium by fleas was first posited. The French physician and biologist Paul-Louis Simond identified that the fleas, unable to feed due to a blockage caused by *Yersinia pestis*, were forced to regurgitate their food and so infected the rats. When the rodent population began to die out as a result, the fleas took humans as their hosts and the plague spread quickly, making its containment nigh on impossible in the medically primitive 14th century.

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X3

Although this remained the predominant theory for much of the 20th century, several studies did emerge that cast doubts on both Simond's findings and on the Black Death being a bubonic plague at all; alternatives put forward included it being an Ebola-like virus or a strain of anthrax. Although the pandemic has now been proven, without doubt, to have been bubonic plague, such studies were at least more medically scrupulous than what was offered at the time of the Black Death itself. Then, a leading school of thought was that the heavens were to blame: that an astronomical conjunction – in this case, the three planets of Jupiter, Mars and Saturn aligning – had produced a phenomenon known as 'bad air', which infected large swathes of Earth. This kind of miasma theory had been applied to breakouts of illness and disease since the fourth century BC.

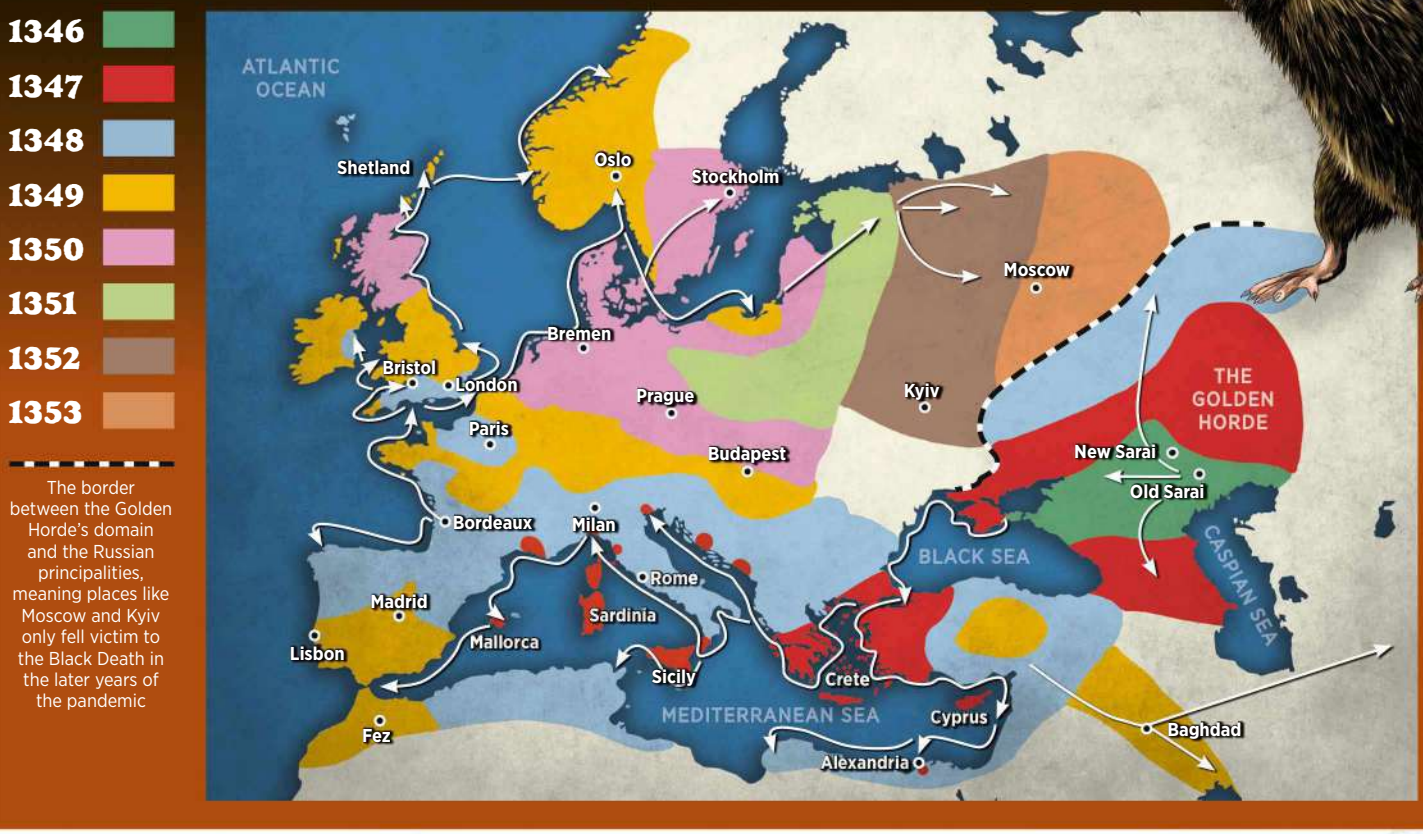
Religion was another lens through which the cause of the Black Death was viewed, whether interpreted as a punishment from on high dished out to the less devout or sinful members of the population or, in the view of some Muslim scholars, that contracting the

RIGHT: **The 19th-century French physician Paul-Louis Simond (seen injecting a patient) proved plague could be transmitted from rat fleas**

BELOW: **The movement of the planets, explained here in a medieval diagram, was directly blamed for the spread of the Black Death**

YEAR BY YEAR: HOW THE BLACK DEATH SPREAD

From its first outbreaks in the east, the pandemic consumed most of Europe



The terrifying disease progressed through Europe in a variety of ways, including via pilgrim routes

disease was a form of martyrdom issued by God. Indeed, a number of Muslim physicians didn't even try to treat infected patients, believing that any medical intervention would be ineffective against divine will.

Whatever the cause, the speed at which the Black Death spread was unprecedented and prevented any effective measures of containment. It first made landfall in Europe at Constantinople (now Istanbul), and that was where it claimed an early notable victim. Showing no regard for status, the disease took the life of the son of newly anointed Byzantine emperor John VI Kantakouzenos, with the 13-year-old Andronikos succumbing just three days into the outbreak.

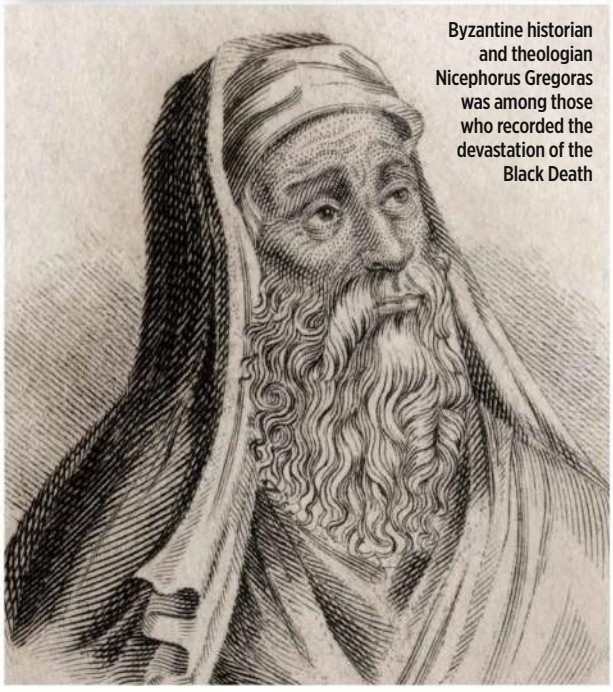
The boy was among thousands in the city taken by the plague. The emperor used religion as his explanation, declaring that the pestilence had been "sent by God to restore chastity", while his contemporary, the scholar Nicephorus Gregoras, painted a vivid picture of the unrelenting misery being delivered to Constantinople and its densely packed population. "The calamity attacked men as well as women, rich and poor, old and young," he wrote. "It did not spare those of any age or fortune. No one could help anyone else."

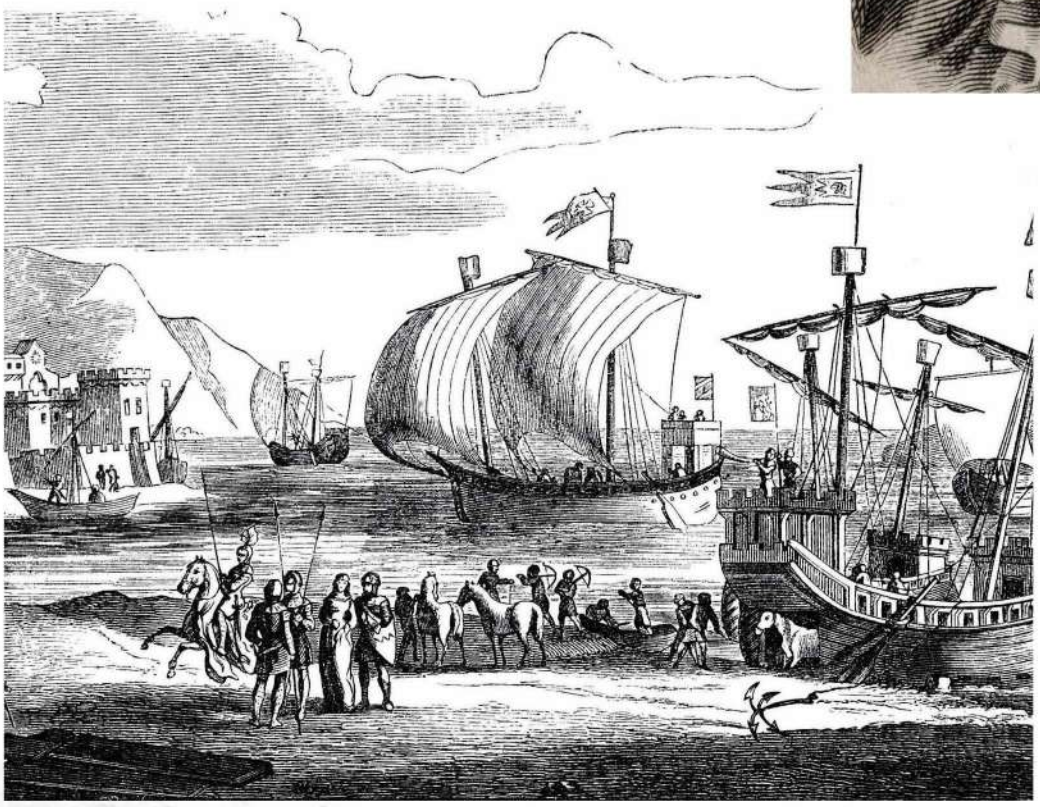
As well as spreading from major ports and cities along established trade routes, the disease made its passage along byways frequented by religious pilgrims. What's more, when the Black Death penetrated a city or town, its inhabitants often chose to flee in an attempt to outrun the plague. The disease was therefore taken to outlying villages that might otherwise have remained free of its devastating grip.

OUT FROM THE MED

Along with the islands of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, the plague landed at various points of the Mediterranean Basin during 1347, most notably in what is now southern Greece, along with port cities such as Split, Genoa and Marseille. By the end of the following year, most of southern Europe was affected, as well as the vast majority of the north African coast and much of the Middle East. The spread continued in a north-westerly direction through Europe in 1349, absorbing swathes of latter-day France and Germany.

Southern England had already been infected thanks to trading ships from southern France unsuspectingly exporting it. The plague first arrived on English shores when a vessel from Bordeaux landed at Melcombe Regis in Dorset in May 1348. By the following year, half of all Londoners had fallen victim, before it coursed northwards through the country. The first Scottish cases were recorded in 1350.


Byzantine historian and theologian Nicephorus Gregoras was among those who recorded the devastation of the Black Death

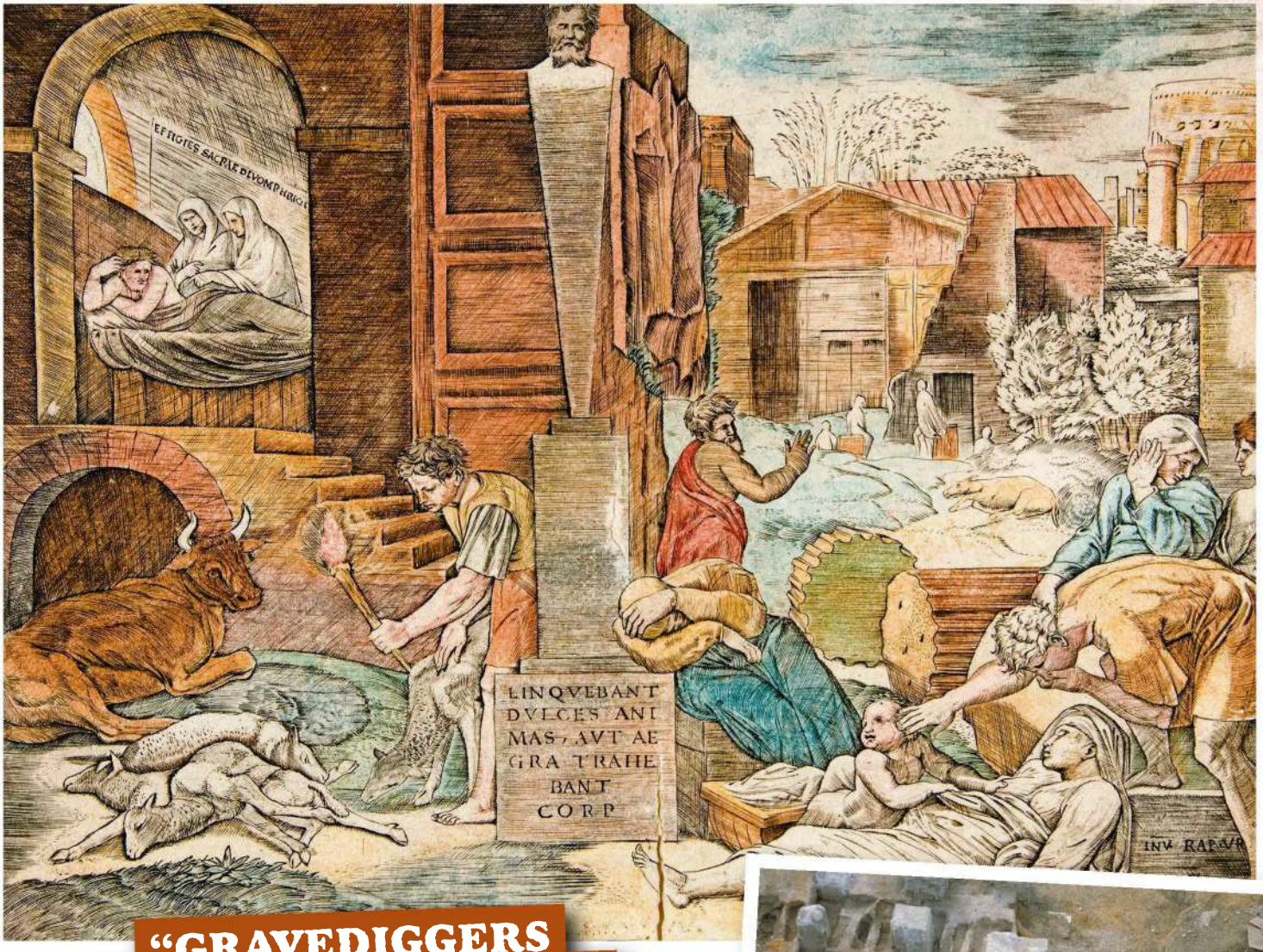

The Black Death first entered England in 1348 on board trading vessels from France arriving in Dorset; before long, London was overwhelmed

While the shipping routes of the Mediterranean Basin, the English Channel and North Sea ensured the Black Death had an easy passage around western Europe, territories to the east remained unaffected for a comparatively substantial period of time. It wasn't until the later stages of the pandemic that cities like Kyiv and Moscow felt its icy paw. Indeed, it didn't reach the latter until the final year: 1353. This wasn't merely down to the comparative absence of well-travelled trade routes; the plague prospered less in colder climates, hence its lack of penetration into the more northerly reaches of Scandinavia.

NO TIME TO MOURN

By the time it had reached Moscow, the Black Death had claimed millions of lives. In Europe alone, the population is thought to have been reduced by at least 30 per cent. The scale of the devastation was unmanageable. Gravediggers could not keep up with the numbers

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3



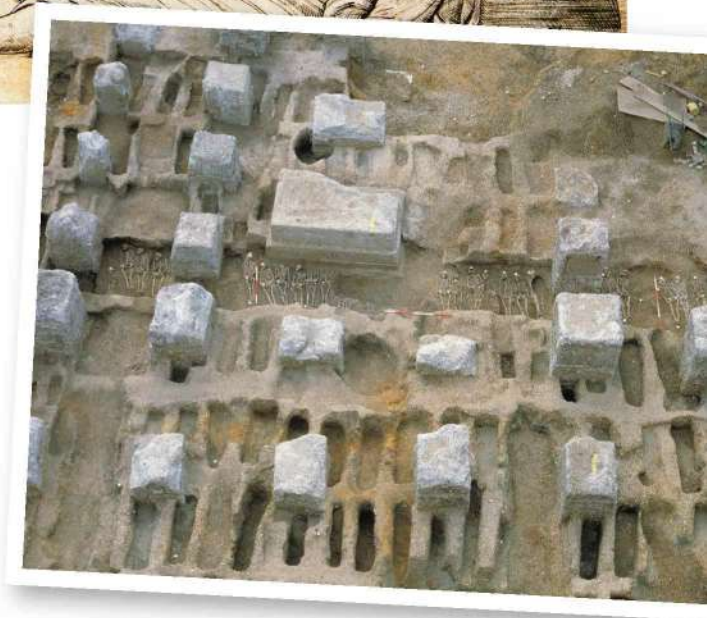
"GRAVEDIGGERS COULD NOT KEEP UP WITH THE NUMBERS OF BODIES NEEDING TO BE DISPOSED OF"

of bodies needing to be disposed of. Indeed, the Italian chronicler Agnolo di Tura not only observed mass burials in his home city of Siena, but the terrible consequences of them being carried out in haste and without care: "There were also those who were so sparsely covered with earth that the dogs dragged them forth and devoured many bodies throughout the city."

While the pandemic had lessened by 1352, the plague didn't disappear. In England, it would raise its ugly head on a regular basis for the next 300 or so years, making a reappearance as frequently as every decade. Thankfully – and despite denser living conditions by the 17th century – the effects would never again be as brutal as they had been during the mid-14th century. Laws instituted to isolate the sick, and advances in sanitation and public health, helped contain the spread.

Having survived the Black Death – and having interpreted their deliverance in whatever way they chose – many across Europe then elected not to embark on a lengthy period of mournful reflection. Whether typical or not, Agnolo di Tura recorded the general mood in Siena. "When the pestilence abated, all who survived gave themselves over to pleasures: monks, priests, nuns, and lay men and women all enjoyed themselves, and none worried about spending and gambling. And everyone thought himself rich because he had escaped and regained the world." ⊙

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL



TOP: **A 16th-century engraving, by Italian Marcantonio Raimondi, shows a town suffering from a plague outbreak**

ABOVE: **A mass Black Death burial site in East Smithfield, London**

A priest administers last rites to a dying woman and child in this 19th-century painting by Baldassarre Calamai, inspired by accounts of the Black Death in Florence

GRIEF AND DESPERATION

The Black Death triggered untold panic across Europe, causing people to desert their loved ones and seek out scapegoats

The boats that docked in 14th-century Europe's bustling ports brought with them a dizzying array of exotic goods: furs from Russia, nutmeg from southeast Asia, sapphires and rubies from the Indian subcontinent. Yet in this increasingly globalised world, merchants also carried a commodity that you couldn't buy over the counter: news. And in 1348, that news began to send waves of anxiety pulsing across the continent.

Sailors arriving from the far east, India and western Asia brought with them apocalyptic visions of death and suffering on an unprecedented scale. Soon, tales of worms with eight legs dropping from heaven and killing thousands with their stench, and of a contagious smoke striking hordes of people dead, were filling Europeans with a deep sense of unease. These were fantastical tales indeed. Yet, at their heart, lay a hellish truth: a terrible pestilence was beating a relentless path westwards. From Venice to Vienna, Dubrovnik to Dublin, the people of Europe knew the grim fate that awaited them as the plague closed in. Worse still, they knew there was little they could do about it.

When the Black Death did wash up on Europe's shores, it would prove every bit as vicious as the rumours had anticipated. It's estimated that, by the time it had finished raging across the continent in 1353, plague had killed well over 30 per cent of the total population.

The numbers are horrifying. But this was a psychological catastrophe

A 14th-century manuscript illumination shows goods being hauled onto a boat. International trade served to fuel the spread of the Black Death across Europe

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X3

as well as a statistical one, as the anxiety experienced by those standing in the plague's path proves. To truly understand the impact of the Black Death, we need to look beyond the numbers and consider what it was like to live through what was the most destructive pandemic in human history. How did people make sense of what was unfolding before them?

GRINDING TO A HALT

If chroniclers of the events of the late 1340s are to be believed, then the psychological impact of the arrival of the plague was both instant and brutal. Describing the Black Death's impact on Cairo, the Egyptian historian Ahmad al Maqrizi wrote that the city became a ghost town, one in which debris was left to pile up high, and the air was filled with lamentations and howling. Others describe a veil of shock, confusion and paralysis settling on Europe's cities. Government records from the Italian city of Siena suggest that, in the summer of 1348, when the plague was at its most terrifying height, courts ceased to function and the wheels of government all but ground to a halt.

Yet the records also reveal that, once communities had come to terms with what was happening, they did pick themselves up from the canvas and try to find ways of navigating the crisis. Soon authorities were introducing legislation designed to slow the spread of the contagion. For example, the authorities in the Italian town of Pistoia banned visitors from neighbouring Pisa and Lucca.

Meanwhile, it was decreed that infected bodies couldn't be removed from the place of the death until they were in a wooden box, and that they had to be buried two-and-a-half arms' length deep in the earth. In England, so concerned was King Edward III by the destruction that plague was wreaking on his realm that, in 1349, he issued a command to the mayor of London, telling him to clean up the city streets by employing muckrakers to remove all waste.

Despite such measures, little could dampen the discombobulation that gripped people as the Black Death ran its course. This was a world of unimaginable grief, one in which people watched brothers and sisters, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters sicken and succumb. "Will I be the next to die," was, no doubt, the question that haunted many people's nightmares.

Many, like the medics who tended to the sick, or the clergy who leant in close and administered the last rites to the dying, put their fears to one side and walked straight towards the greatest danger. Yet, according to the Florentine writer Giovanni Boccaccio, others headed in the opposite direction. They abandoned the sick and dying to their fate, shutting the door behind them, never to return.

Writing in 1355, Boccaccio reported that the Black Death had "implanted so great a terror in the hearts of men and women that brothers abandoned brothers, uncles their nephews, sisters their brothers, and in many cases wives deserted their husbands. But even worse," he noted, "was the fact that fathers and mothers refused to nurse and assist their own children, as though they did not belong to them."

We can't be sure how widespread the abandonment phenomenon was during the Black Death. But the fact that a work known as the *Florentine Chronicle of Marchionne di Coppo Stefani* also describes people telling their stricken loved ones ▶

TOP: **Florentine writer Giovanni Boccaccio later recalled that some parents refused to nurse and assist their own children**

BOTTOM: **A painting by the Baroque artist Giuseppe Maria Crespi depicts a scene of desperation in Siena**

"THEY ABANDONED THE SICK AND DYING TO THEIR FATE, SHUTTING THE DOOR BEHIND THEM, NEVER TO RETURN"

An illustration from a French edition of Giovanni Boccaccio's short story collection *The Decameron* shows the author with fellow Florentines who have fled the plague

"ACTS OF DEVOTION MULTIPLIED DURING THE LATE 1340s, AS DID THE DISTRIBUTION OF ALMS"

that they were going to call a doctor, before leaving them to die, suggests that it was somewhat widespread. Giovanni Boccaccio and his contemporaries condemned abandonment as shameless, cruel and immoral. It was doubtless all of those things, but it was also a manifestation of the extreme trauma being experienced by communities in the grips of a ferocious pandemic.

GOING TO EXTREMES

While some people thought only of self-preservation, others turned their thoughts to God. In an age of intense faith, it was inevitable that many people would interpret the enormous privations being visited upon them as the work of a higher power. Some ascribed the disease to planetary movements; more still concluded that humanity had sinned and that plague was God's punishment.

As a result, acts of devotion multiplied in the late 1340s, as did the distribution of alms. Yet other people sought to placate God in more extreme ways. By the end of 1348, so-called flagellants were processing barefoot across Europe, singing the passion of Christ. Henry of Hervodia, a German chronicler, described how they whipped themselves with cattle prongs, which drew blood that spilt down naked backs to their "lower parts".

While some expressions of religious devotion during the Black Death were, to modern eyes, strange indeed, others were plain ugly. When the fabric of society begins to fray, people often channel their terror into hostility towards a scapegoat. The Black Death was no different.

And so, as the pandemic raged, Europe's Jews found themselves accused of a litany of crimes, from poisoning wells to contaminating food supplies through their concoctions "of frogs and spiders mixed into oil and cheese to destroy Christendom". The end game was depressingly familiar: a wave of pogroms across central Europe, with an early 20th-century historical work named the *Germania Judaica* reporting the annihilation of at least 235 Jewish communities at and around the time of the Black Death.

Plague administered a shocking, sustained blow to Europe's psyche. And, as has so often been the case down the centuries, the continent's Jews were among those to pay the heaviest price.

WORDS: SPENCER MIZEN

A Spanish manuscript illumination shows a woman distributing alms to the poor. Acts of charitable giving rose during the Black Death

A SUFFOLK TRAGEDY

Court rolls provide a fascinating insight into one family's experience of the plague

When it started sweeping across the country from 1348, the Black Death destroyed countless families up and down England. The vast majority are lost to history. Yet, occasionally, the written record offers a snapshot of the pain, grief and dislocation experienced by those at the sharp end.

One such snapshot is buried in the court rolls for the village of Walsham le Willows, deep in the Suffolk countryside. Those records introduce us to William Cranmer, the head of a family of farmers, who held a tenement from the local landowner. Life, it seems, had hardly been easy for the Cranmers before the Black Death struck their village. Famine had hit Walsham le Willows repeatedly in the 1340s, and William was, the records tell us, fined for keeping too many animals and stealing firewood.

Then, in late spring 1349, plague arrived. Within a matter of weeks, perhaps 600 residents of Walsham le Willows (around half the village's population) had been sent to an early grave, among them poor William Cranmer. William's holdings passed to his son and heir, who himself died of plague. Then William's grandsons also succumbed.

It was a terrible toll for one family to sustain (made worse by the fact that, following each death, the Cranmers had to pay a tax of an animal to the local landowner). Yet in the context of the late 1340s, it was depressingly familiar.

St Mary's Church in Walsham le Willows, where members of the Cranmer family worshipped

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X3

The original St Paul's Cathedral became a 'pest house' during the Black Death, as this woodcut shows

A fresco inside the Chapel of St Sebastian in Villard-de-Lans, France, shows doctors providing treatment to plague victims

Edward III, king of England, had to act quickly to protect the public from infection

GOING INTO LOCKDOWN

Helen Carr explores the measures used across the centuries to curb the spread of the deadliest disease in human history

In May 1348, a ship glided into the port of Melcombe Regis in England, carrying a disease from the east that had already ravaged the western world. It had killed men, women and children in their thousands quickly and mercilessly. This was the bubonic plague, identified by the blackening 'buboes' that formed within the joint area of an infected person – the groin or armpit were the most common places. These were accompanied by bodily aches, cold, lethargy and a high fever. When the infection got into the bloodstream it effectively poisoned the blood, leading to probable death. Some survived the infection, but most people died within days, sometimes hours. This wave of bubonic plague became known then as the Great Pestilence – or later, as the Black Death.

WIDESPREAD DEVASTATION

By November 1348 the disease had reached London, and by New Year's Day 1349 around 200 bodies a day were being piled into mass graves outside the city. Henry Knighton, an Augustinian monk, witnessed the devastation of the Black Death in England: "There was a general mortality throughout the world… sheep and oxen strayed through the fields and among the crops and there was none to drive them off or collect them, but they perished in uncounted numbers… for lack of shepherds… After the Pestilence many buildings fell into total ruin for lack of inhabitants; similarly many small villages and hamlets became desolate and no homes were left in them, for all those who had dwelt anthem [sic] were dead."

The countryside went to ruin, with crops, livestock and produce dying for lack of people to tend to them. Towns were abandoned, left only with the dead to occupy them, and war with France – the first part of the later-named Hundred Years' War – was put on hold. England and the rest of Europe was forced to come to terms with an epidemic of an apocalyptic nature that drastically changed the landscape of society.

In a bid to take control of the epidemic, Edward III, king of England at the time, ▶

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X1

MAIN: **The plague at Tournai, Belgium, as depicted in Gilles Li Muisis's annals of 1349**

BELOW: **A statuette of Joan of England on the tomb of her father, Edward III. The princess died of the Black Death in 1348, aged just 14**

"THE COUNTRY WAS IN LOCKDOWN AND THE PEOPLE LOOKED TO THE KING TO SUPPORT THEM"

◀ was forced to turn his attention to domestic matters. Before the outbreak in England, his daughter Princess Joan had contracted plague after her ship docked in Bordeaux. She was on her way to marry Prince Peter of Castile as part of a diplomatic marriage alliance between the two kingdoms. Joan never reached Castile and, upon discovery that the plague had taken hold of Bordeaux, she took refuge in a small village called Loremo, where she then died alongside a large part of her entourage.

The king was devastated by the news and acted quickly and decisively to try to curb the outbreak in England. The 1349 January parliament was postponed until Easter (however, when spring came, parliament was still empty). Officials fled to their homes in the country and sheriffs refused to conduct their business for fear of their lives. The country was in lockdown and the people looked to the king to support them in the crisis.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

Edward's response was rational: he suspected that poor public hygiene was responsible for the epidemic. In a bid to tackle the spread of infection, he proposed the idea of creating emergency cemeteries for the plague victims, including one in East Smithfield, near the Tower of London. In 1349, the king also wrote to the lord mayor of the capital, directing him to have the streets thoroughly cleaned, for they were "foul with human faeces, and the air of the city poisioned [sic] to the great danger of men passing, especially in this time of infectious disease".

Overseas, further precautions were taken. In Italy in 1347, almost a year before the plague reached England, ports began to turn away ships, fearful that they carried the deadly disease. By March 1348 these protective measures were formalised, and Venice became the first city to close its ports to incoming vessels. Those they did admit were subjected to 30 days of isolation, later raised to 40, which eventually led to the birth of the term 'quarantine' (derived from *quaranta giorni*, meaning '40 days'), for ships were forced to wait in the middle of the Venetian lagoon before they were permitted to disembark. Remote cemeteries were dug, and in

The famous Black Death cemetery at East Smithfield, London, was excavated by archaeologists in the 1980s. More than 700 sets of remains were uncovered in total

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X3

PLAGUE COTTAGE
Mary Hadfield, formerly Cooper, lived here with her two sons, Edward and Jonathan, her new husband, Alexander Hadfield and an employed hand George Viccars
George Viccars, the first plague victim, died on 7th September 1665
Edward Cooper, aged 4 died on the 22nd September 1665
Jonathan Cooper, aged 12, died on the 2nd October 1665
Alexander Hadfield died on the 3rd August 1666
Mary alone survived but lost 13 relatives

ABOVE LEFT: **Lazzaretto Vecchio, near Venice, became a quarantine island during the Black Death**

ABOVE RIGHT: **The cottage where the first villager died of the plague in Eyam, Derbyshire, during the 1665–66 outbreak**

BELOW: **A Victorian engraving depicting a 17th-century isolation hospital in Tothill Fields, Westminster**

a later outbreak, the Venetians even went as far as establishing a quarantine island on Lazzaretto Vecchio, a small island in the Venetian Lagoon. An excavation that took place in 2007 revealed more than 1,500 skeletons, all supposedly victims of bubonic plague. Thousands more are believed to remain below ground on the island.

However, these measures were too little too late. Plague still took hold in Venice – as it did globally – killing an estimated 100,000 people, a catastrophic proportion of the Venetian population.

England shared the same fate. In 1300 the population had reached around 5 million, and by 1377 this was reduced to 2.5 million. Plague had claimed half of the population, wiping out entire families, villages and even towns such as Bristol. The measures that were taken to hinder the spread of the first Black Death epidemic were powerless, but there were contingency plans for future outbreaks later in history.

INFECTION CONTROL

In 1563, when plague struck again (as the disease did most years, although some outbreaks were more severe than others), the lord mayor of London ordered that blue crosses should be attached to doors of houses that held anyone infected with plague over the past week. Inhabitants were to stay indoors for one month after the death or infection of anyone in the building. Only one uninfected person was allowed out of the house, in order to buy provisions for the sick or healing. To mark their health, they were meant to carry a white rod, which if they forgot would incur a fine or even imprisonment.

In 1593 plague struck London again and houses were to be incarcerated for 40 days – the typical quarantine period stipulated in 14th-century Venice. By then, shipping was heavily monitored, and crews and passengers were quarantined either on board their vessels or in the port where they had disembarked. Merchants were kept at the port of Rye and were prohibited from entering the city, and all goods were to be aired in order not to transport infection. Movement was also monitored within the country – travellers into London from outside counties were prohibited if there was known to be plague in their area.

END OF THE PLAGUE?

Outbreaks of plague continued in England into the 17th century, the most savage and famous being the 1665–66 epidemic. In a 1630 outbreak, further quarantine measures were taken in London, with the Privy Council again ordering that houses were shut up when those inside were infected. However, to enforce the order, guards were to be stationed outside the infected house. This was soon replaced with the order that the people inside were to be sent to a 'pest house' (an enclosed hospital for those suffering from the plague) while their residence was closed up. More famously, the village of Eyam in Derbyshire imposed a self-quarantine during the 1665–66 outbreak in order to prevent the spread of infection into other villages.

Over four centuries, plague devastated the lives of millions, and despite the best efforts of the authorities, there was little to be done in order to control the spread of such virulent infection. People blamed themselves, usually in the belief that they were being punished by God for their sins – some even believed that the epidemic was an apocalypse.

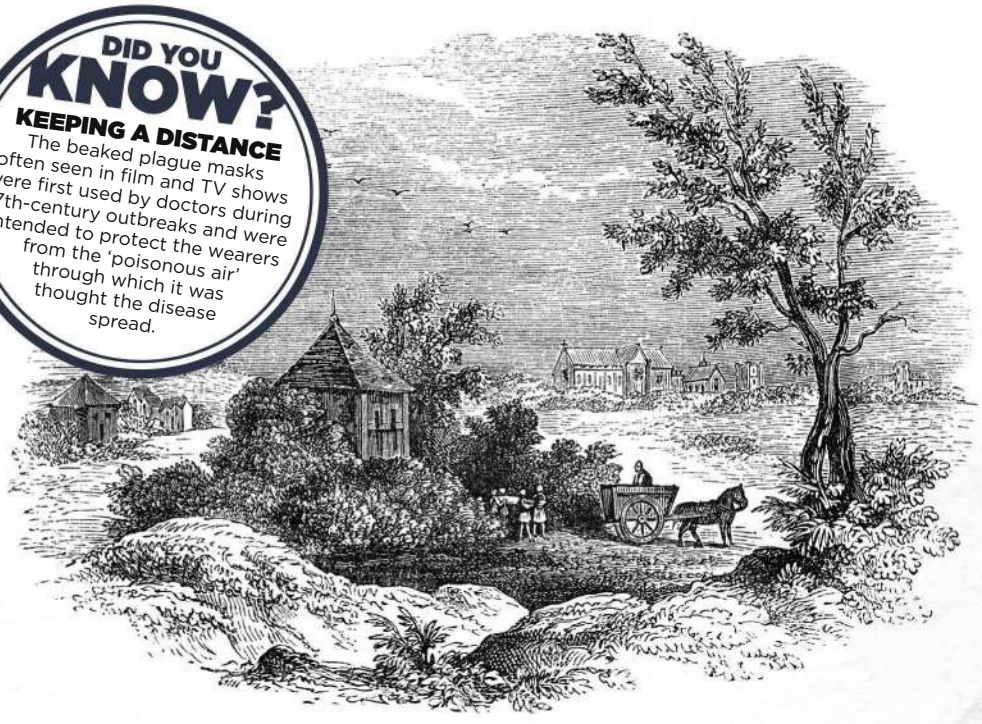
Plague still does, of course, exist: in the past few years there have been outbreaks in Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while a 1994 outbreak claimed the lives of 52 people in India. However, we do not tend to experience the rates of mortality that were seen in the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Thanks to modern medicine, it is unlikely we will see anything on the scale of the Black Death again.

HELEN CARR is a historian, writer and producer, specialising in medieval history and public history. She is the author of *The Red Prince: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster* (Oneworld Publications, 2021)

DID YOU KNOW?

KEEPING A DISTANCE

The beaked plague masks often seen in film and TV shows were first used by doctors during 17th-century outbreaks and were intended to protect the wearers from the 'poisonous air' through which it was thought the disease spread.



DOCTOR'S ORDERS

As plague swept the globe, medieval doctors recommended a range of preventative measures and 'cures'...

FOUR THIEVES VINEGAR

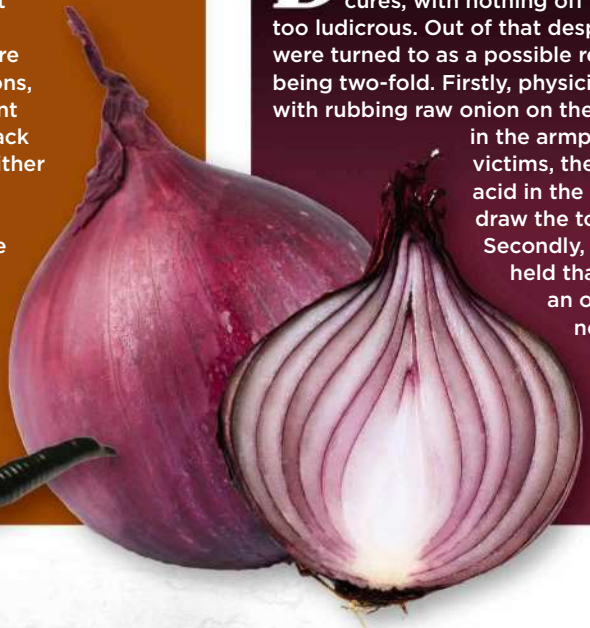
The curious name of this supposed protective potion comes from a – possibly apocryphal – story from southern France. When the Black Death reached western Europe, a folk tale emerged about a quartet of opportunistic thieves who preyed on plague victims, stealing their personal possessions when they were either close to death or had just died. Despite their proximity to the afflicted, the thieves managed to evade infection thanks to, so legend says, a potion which they washed with and drank on a daily basis. One of their number was a herbalist and had created the concoction, which was believed to contain wine vinegar and herbs such as wormwood and sage. When the thieves were eventually apprehended for their crimes, they reportedly attempted to bribe public officials by offering to divulge the potion's recipe in exchange for immunity from prosecution. Even if the story has been reshaped over the centuries, it may contain some credibility; wormwood is an insect repellent and would thus be unsavoury to plague-carrying fleas.

BLOODLETTING

The practice of bloodletting – draining a significant quantity of blood from the body in an attempt to remove infection and ailment – was a cover-all cure in medieval times, used to treat a wide array of afflictions, from fever to epilepsy. Also long adopted as a treatment for plague, it was naturally applied to victims of the Black Death. The blood was withdrawn in one of two ways: either through the use of a blade to the forearm (the blood would then be collected in a bowl, as seen above) or through the application of bloodsucking leeches on the patient's boils. Unsurprisingly, draining blood from the body was no way of banishing the fatal bacteria. In fact, this cure had the opposite effect. Not only were patients likely to be severely weakened by blood loss, but the practice carried the prospect of further infection from a shared blade.

ONIONS

Desperate to slow the mushrooming spread of the Black Death, physicians fumbled for cures, with nothing off limits and no theory too ludicrous. Out of that desperation, onions were turned to as a possible remedy, the reasoning being two-fold. Firstly, physicians experimented with rubbing raw onion on the boils that developed in the armpits and groins of victims, the idea being that the acid in the vegetable would draw the toxins from the body. Secondly, the notion was held that the strength of an onion's fumes would neutralise the effects of miasma, the noxious vapours thought by medieval society to bring illness and disease.



GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X2, SAM NOTT X1

URINE AND FAECES

Among the most unpalatable ways that doctors attempted to combat the devastating effects of the Black Death was through the use of human faeces. Combined with other substances like flower roots and tree sap to form a paste, it was applied directly into boils that had been cut open. The wounds were then tightly bound to ensure the foul-smelling paste did not escape. Human excrement was obviously in high supply, as was urine – another substance utilised as a remedy. Plague victims might be bathed in urine several times a day in order to neutralise and soothe the infection; patients were also encouraged to drink it as a way of cleansing the body from the inside out.

An image from a 1574 plague outbreak shows a doctor analysing a patient's urine – something physicians did during the Black Death, too

DID YOU KNOW?

WHAT A GEM

Some of the wealthy victims of the Black Death adopted a cure befitting their status: they would have emeralds crushed into a powder and mixed into their food or drink. If not crushed enough, however, it would be like biting into glass.

THE VICARY METHOD

Of all the untested treatments offered to Black Death victims, none was as outlandish – certainly to 21st-century eyes – as the Vicary Method. The product of the imagination of English doctor Thomas Vicary, the practice required the easy availability of a live chicken. The bird would have the feathers around its rear end plucked before being strapped to the patient, with the boils in direct contact with the chicken's now-bald backside. Vicary's thinking behind it was based on another outlandish medieval notion: that fowl breathed through their anuses. The idea of the cure, therefore, was that the chicken would somehow 'suck' the infection from the boil. Needless to say, there is no evidence of anyone being cured by this method, while plenty of chickens perished by becoming infected themselves.

POSIES OF FLOWERS AND HERBS

"Ring-a-ring-o'-roses / A pocketful of posies / A-tishoo! A-tishoo! / We all fall down." One of the better-known attempted remedies endures more than 600 years after the pandemic in a children's nursery rhyme. Never mind that folklorists have refuted the idea that it's a song contemporary with the Black Death. The "roses" supposedly represent the red ring-like marks that would appear on the skin as early symptoms, while the "pocketful of posies" were the small bunches of flowers or herbs suggested by some doctors that could ward off the disease if carried by the patient. It was thought that their pleasant smell would counteract the bad odours popularly believed to be the source of the Black Death.

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL

Flagellants, such as the men depicted in this late 15th-century woodcut, hoped that whipping themselves would bring the Black Death to an end

PUNISHMENT FROM ON HIGH

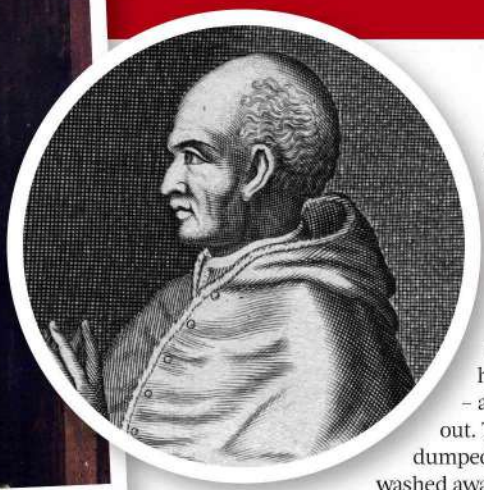
An unshakeable certainty that the plague was God's punishment for sin led to desperate, and terrible, measures

While the Black Death swept across towns, cities and countries, people desperately looked to the heavens for salvation. They also looked to God for an explanation for the plague, and went to extreme measures to call upon divine favour. Town squares all over continental Europe teemed with flagellants: men dressed in white robes marked with red crosses on the back, wielding whips and chanting in solemn tones. As their chorus rose to a crescendo, they would get on their knees and start lashing themselves. The whips, which had metal studs or nails tied to the leather thongs, flayed the skin, but the barbaric self-punishment would continue until the blood sprayed across the square.

Flagellants believed that there was a connection between enduring physical pain and avoiding the ravages of plague. Medieval Europe was ruled by religion, and many Christians fervently believed the preachings of the Church that the Black Death was God's way of punishing sinners. "These pestilences were for pure sin," wrote the contemporary poet William Langland.

But this judgment put priests in a difficult position. While it was their spiritual duty to guide their flock, how should they treat victims of the plague if they – according to the Church – were being divinely punished? Some spurned the pleas of the infected to bless them, or fled their parishes when red crosses started being painted on the doors. Others refused to abandon their charges, however, and risked their lives by visiting plague victims when they were near

GETTY IMAGES X5



death's door to hear their confessions and administer last rites. As well as tending to spiritual matters, some members of the clergy took responsibility for people's physical care, trying their best to ease suffering where they could. But the cost was deadly: more than 40 per cent of priests who gave plague victims their last rites ended up contracting the disease and perishing themselves.

In an effort to stop the Black Death in its tracks, the Church implored Christians to pray to God and atone for their sins. People flooded the streets of Europe's cities in sprawling religious marches in order to pray en masse and soothe God's fury. Religious amulets became popular, with people writing a prayer or the name of a saint on a slip of parchment and wearing it to try and repel the plague.

ABOVE LEFT: **Priests often prayed for plague victims, putting their own lives at risk**

ABOVE RIGHT: **Pope Clement VI faced the flagellants, pogroms and overwhelming body counts**

BELOW: **Black Death fears fuelled horrific anti-Jewish violence and massacres all across Europe**

Yet, despite these efforts, plague pits continued to fill with the stinking and swollen bodies of the dead. In 1349, the situation had grown so dire that Pope Clement VI consecrated the Rhône, the river near Avignon – then the headquarters of the papacy – as burial space had run out. This way, bodies could be dumped straight into the water and washed away, with relatives able to take comfort that the dead had been interred in holy surroundings.

For others, though, the Church did not have the answers. Thousands of disillusioned and desperate Christians turned to flagellantism. Spreading across much of northern and central Europe, adherents to the movement believed that by publicly enduring extreme physical pain, they would not only atone for their own sins, but those of the community around them. In groups of a few hundred, but occasionally thousands, flagellants marched from town to town and whipped at their flesh until their skin split open, while a crowd watched. At the end of their ordeal, the leader would read out a 'heavenly letter', preaching repentance and imploring those present to beg God to stop the plague.

The flagellant movement deeply worried the Church as it did not follow papal guidance and taught people a false lesson of penitence. Moreover, it did more harm than good: not only by weakening the flagellants themselves, but by inadvertently bringing the plague to places that may have otherwise escaped it. In 1349, the pope branded the leaders of the flagellants as heretics, and the movement faded once the pandemic burned out.

"FLAGELLANTS WHIPPED AT THEIR FLESH UNTIL THE SKIN SPLIT OPEN"

WAVE OF PERSECUTIONS

Another, much darker, response to the Black Death from Christendom was the persecution of Jewish communities. Almost as quickly as the plague itself, rumours spread that Jewish people were to blame, having unleashed the disease in a plot to destroy Christian civilisation. In the wake of malevolent claims of Jews poisoning wells, a wave of violence broke out across Europe. Christians razed homes and murdered entire families. In Strasbourg, the citizens imprisoned 900 Jewish people before burning them alive, while around the same number were expelled.

Although Pope Clement VI tried to stop the pogroms by issuing papal bulls, vicious outbursts continued during the pandemic. But in the Near East, which was equally ravaged by the Black Death, anti-Semitism didn't rear its head. The majority of the population were Muslim and believed that Allah had created the Black Death to bring "martyrdom and mercy" to believers. Any Muslims who succumbed were guaranteed a spot in Jannah (paradise), but those who did not follow the teachings of Islam and died from the disease were being punished. That being said, Muslims were still not keen for the Black Death to linger, and many descended on their mosques to pray together, pleading for Allah to bring a halt to the disease.

By the time the Black Death concluded around 1353, it was to the intense relief of Muslims and Christians alike. However, its consequences for Christianity reverberated down the centuries. It seemed as though God had ignored people's desperate prayers for relief, despite the promises of the Church of a divine answer. This disillusionment helped lay the groundwork that eventually led to the Reformation and the fracturing of the Church, almost two centuries later.

WORDS: RHIANNON DAVIES

MEET THE EXPERT

JOHN HATCHER is emeritus professor of economic and social history at the University of Cambridge and the author of numerous books, including *The Black Death: An Intimate History* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008). To hear Professor Hatcher discuss the Black Death on the *HistoryExtra* podcast, scan the QR code shown here or visit *historyextra.com/black-death-podcast*

PROFESSOR JOHN HATCHER ON THE HISTORY OF BLACK DEATH RESEARCH

Many twists and turns were to come before the nature of the disease was fully established

In the mid-1340s, a pestilence of terrifying ferocity arose in east Asia and spread remorselessly across continents. In less than 10 years it had traversed the whole of the known world and beyond, leaving scarcely more than half of its population alive. This 'Great Pestilence', now known as the Black Death, was followed by a long series of outbreaks, albeit of diminishing scope and lethality, that continued to recur in Europe until the early 18th century and in north Africa and parts of Asia for even longer. It is now known that this protracted pandemic of plague had been preceded by another that began in the mid-sixth century and lasted until the mid-eighth century, and was followed by a third plague pandemic that began in the 1850s and deemed to have lasted until 1960. Although plague is now easily treatable with antibiotics, outbreaks continue to occur in parts of Africa and Asia, with sporadic deaths also seen in rural areas of the US and South America.

Decisive advances began to be made in the bacteriology and epidemiology of plague in the mid-19th century, with a crucial breakthrough occurring in 1894, when a new bacterium was found in the blood and tissue of victims. It was subsequently named *Yersinia pestis* after its discoverer, Alexandre Yersin. Further research confirmed the role of rats and their fleas in transmitting the disease to humans, as well as the various forms it could take, namely bubonic, pneumonic and septicemic, which accorded closely with descriptions of the symptoms displayed by victims during the Black Death and later epidemics. Consequently, the disease that caused by far the most devastating worldwide mortalities was revealed as bubonic plague. But many more twists and turns were to come before the nature of this deadly disease was fully established.

In 1970, a book-length study by a bacteriologist maintained that bubonic plague could never have killed more than one in 20 of any population. It was followed by claims from a zoologist, who stated that plague had made only a small contribution to the Black Death and that the true agent was likely to have been anthrax. A swelling tide of sceptical studies followed, the majority written by medical scientists, maintaining that the speed and comprehensiveness of these pandemics meant that they must have been caused by a virus rather than a bacterium, and probably one similar to Aids or Ebola. So widespread was the scepticism, but so difficult was it proving to provide a convincing alternative, that a palaeoecologist even published a book arguing that the true cause was probably a pathogen-carrying comet crashing to Earth.

In the last few years, the debate has finally been closed, as analysis of the DNA found in skeletons in a large number of Black Death burial sites has shown – without a shadow of doubt – that the victims had died from bubonic plague. However, this finding presents scientists and historians with the new challenge of explaining how a disease thought to spread to humans only by bites from infected fleas carried by rodents could have caused such universal devastation. This is to be added to the task that scholars have already been grappling with for decades, namely assessing the impact that bubonic plague has had on the course of history. There is still much research to be done.

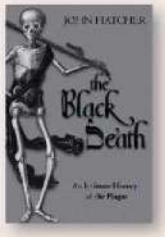
US technicians carry out a plague study in 1965. Our understanding of the disease is still changing, decades later

BRUCE HEAD X1, GETTY IMAGES X2

GET HOOKED

If we've piqued your interest in the Black Death, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, podcasts and radio programmes?

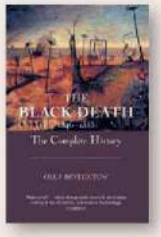
BOOKS



The Black Death: An Intimate History

By Prof John Hatcher (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008)

Prof John Hatcher recreates life in a medieval Suffolk parish, revealing in unique detail what it was like to live and die during the Black Death – from what people experienced, to what they knew and what they believed.



The Black Death 1346–1353: The Complete History

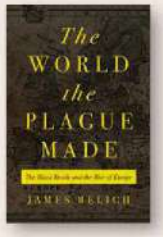
By Prof Ole J Benedictow (Boydell Press, 2004)

The first comprehensive history and assessment of the Black Death's progress, and of the death and devastation it left in its wake as it spread across Asia Minor, the Middle East, north Africa and Europe.

The Decameron

By Giovanni Boccaccio (Penguin Classics, 2003; first published in English in 1620)

Boccaccio's classic work charts the experiences of 10 young Florentines who take refuge from the Black Death in the summer of 1348, with each character telling a story a day for the 10 days of their confinement.



The World the Plague Made: The Black Death and the Rise of Europe

By Prof James Belich (Princeton University Press, 2022)

A panoramic history of how the bubonic plague revolutionised labour, trade and technology and set the stage for Europe's global expansion, ushering in the modern age.

ON THE BBC

▶ The Long View – Rethink: The Unexpected Impact of the Black Death

bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000k7j8

Jonathan Freedland (*pictured*) and Dr Helen Lacey consider the unforeseen consequences of the Black Death on British society.

▶ Sunday Feature: A Cultural History of the Plague

bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02tmwyb

Laura Ashe tells the story of the Black Death and discovers how plague influences our responses to modern emergencies in this programme from 2014.

▶ In Our Time: The Black Death

bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00bcqt8

Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss the Black Death and the way medieval communities responded to it, as well how the disease influenced the structure and ideas of medieval Europe.

ONLINE AND AUDIO

▶ For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on the Black Death, scan the QR code shown right, or visit *historyextra.com/black-death*

▶ The Black Death: everything you wanted to know

Prof John Hatcher answers questions about the medieval pandemic, and reflects on how Covid-19 might shape our understanding of the plague. Listen at *bit.ly/3Q62wU7*

▶ Black Death: "Oh father, why have you abandoned me?"

Prof Samuel Cohn tells the story of a horrifying, yet little known phenomenon: abandonment. Read at *bit.ly/3G9bRpF*

▶ History Explorer: the catastrophe of the Black Death

Prof John Hatcher visits the Suffolk village of Walsham le Willows, which lost half its population to bubonic plague in 1349. Read at *bit.ly/3VBfcU9*

▶ Expert historians explore how the Black Death shook the Middle Ages in a new, six-part podcast series from *HistoryExtra*

BBC X1, GETTY IMAGES X2

TOP 10

HISTORICAL STATUS SYMBOLS

From flowers to follies, **Nige Tassell** looks at the bizarre array of items that the rich and powerful have used to flaunt their wealth in times gone by

PINEAPPLES

It might now be a staple of every supermarket on every high street, but once upon a time, the pineapple was a symbol of exoticism and exclusivity. This was initially down to Charles II, who used pineapples to emphasise his military, political and economic power.

In 1668, Britain and France were at loggerheads over control of the Caribbean island of Saint Kitts. The king entertained the French ambassador over dinner, the highlight of which was a pyramid of fruit, topped by a pineapple. The fruit had only recently appeared on British shores and its inclusion at the dinner was at Charles's behest. He had ordered that one be imported from the colony of Barbados and proceeded to use it as a visual display of Britain's global prominence to France and its representative that evening. Charles referred to it as 'King Pine'.

The well-to-do quarters of British society would later replicate the king's admiration for pineapples and, during the Georgian era, enterprising individuals began to grow the fruit despite Britain's inclement climate. Those that were successfully cultivated came with a sizeable price tag – in the region of £60, around £11,000 in today's money. To merely eat such a prized commodity would have been too decadent. Instead, those who owned a pineapple refused to cut into it, preferring to show it off at a succession of social gatherings until it had rotted beyond recognition. Pineapple owners were also known to carry their fruit around as they went about their day to indicate their status, a practice that prompted the arrival of pineapple thieves.

A painting by Dutch artist Hendrick Danckerts shows Charles II's gardener, John Rose, presenting the king with a pineapple

GETTY IMAGES X7

DID YOU KNOW?

TROPICAL ABODE

The 4th Earl of Dunmore was such a big fan of pineapples that he commissioned the construction of a two-storey summerhouse with a huge stone replica of the fruit on top. The 18th-century building, in Stirlingshire, is now a holiday let.

A medieval illustration thought to depict monk and scholar the Venerable Bede (c673–735) writing his *Life of Saint Cuthbert*

HAND-COPIED BOOKS

Before the invention of the printing press in the mid-15th century, a book was a rarefied object, one of high value both financially and socially. Painstakingly handwritten on parchment, these manuscripts were exclusively the possession of the Church, the wealthier educational establishments or powerful individuals. For the latter, owning one such book offered a level of respect from their peers; owning an entire library of them bestowed an overwhelming degree of social standing. Not only did such a collection signal the depth of one's wealth, but also – presuming the collector had read them – the extent of their intellect and knowledge.

It is perhaps correct that these recreations were prized and coveted. Depending on the length of the text being reproduced, some handwritten books could take beyond 20 years to create. A commission might be near enough the life's work of a scribe, many of whom were monks hand-copying ancient religious texts. The scribe's toil was arduous, as the historian Mary Winnifred noted. "It is hard to bend the neck and furrow parchment for twice three hours."

The exclusive nature of book ownership meant that the exchange of ideas and information was as closely guarded as the manuscripts that disappeared under lock and key when no one was around to show them off to. But the arrival of Johannes Gutenberg's printing press in 1440 precipitated the broadening of book ownership. Although the hand-copied manuscripts retained a high degree of their value, a revolution was underway. By the end of the 15th century, 15 million books had been produced using Gutenberg's famous invention.

"Some handwritten books could take beyond 20 years to produce"

WIGS

The wearing of eye-catching, status-defining wigs has been a near-constant feature of various societies since classical times. In ancient Egypt, a person's social class was easily identified by what material was used in the manufacture of the hairpiece. Those from the upper echelons of Egyptian society wore wigs made from human hair, while those worn by lower standing citizens were created from wool or vegetable fibres. Women's wigs were enhanced by jewellery; the more intricate and/or plentiful the adornments, the higher one's place on the social hierarchy.

The wearing of wigs became fashionable in western Europe with the dawning of the Renaissance, especially when the prematurely balding French king Louis XIV sought assistance in giving the impression of a full head of hair. The nobility of France followed his example, as did his English cousin Charles II. In Georgian England, particularly during the latter half of the 18th century, wigs became a true signifier of social class. With a common-or-garden wig costing around a week's wages of the average middle-class Londoner, richer individuals plumped for higher quality hairpieces that could cost as much as £9,000 in today's money. The term 'bigwig' was born.

The balding French king Louis XIV relied on wigs to fool others into believing he had naturally luscious long locks

A work by 17th-century painter Andrea Domenico Remps shows a cabinet of curiosities bursting with an array of weird and wonderful items – including a human skull

"The more exotic the exhibit, the greater respect that one would achieve"

CABINETS OF CURIOSITIES

Sometimes, a cabinet of curiosities was just what it sounds like – a piece of furniture, inside of which all manner of small-scale curios were displayed. The grander ones took the form of entire rooms, allowing the exhibition of much larger objects. As Giovanni Aloi, from Sotheby's Institute of Art, explains, cabinets of curiosities were "the aristocrat's answer for those who sought to enliven the opulent but dimly lit parties thrown during the Italian Renaissance". The intellectual inquisitiveness of the cabinet's owner was on display to their peers. The more exotic the exhibit, the greater the respect that one would achieve. That was the simple equation.

The objects contained within such cabinets often drew from natural history, art, religion, archaeology and geology. Wealth enabled the most impressive collections, and it was thus unsurprising that monarchs across Europe boasted the most eye-catching curios. One of England's most prominent cabinet owners was Elias Ashmole, whose huge collection of botanic and alchemic objects led to the establishment of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum in 1683. The Ashmolean precipitated the demise of cabinets of curiosities, enabling the general public to observe the fascinating holdings, not just those attending high-society social functions.

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X2

Elias Ashmole's love of collecting bizarre artefacts from around the world led to the creation of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford

SUGAR

An image from the Arab medical treatise *Tacuinum Sanitatis* shows a woman buying sugar, which was thought to have medicinal properties

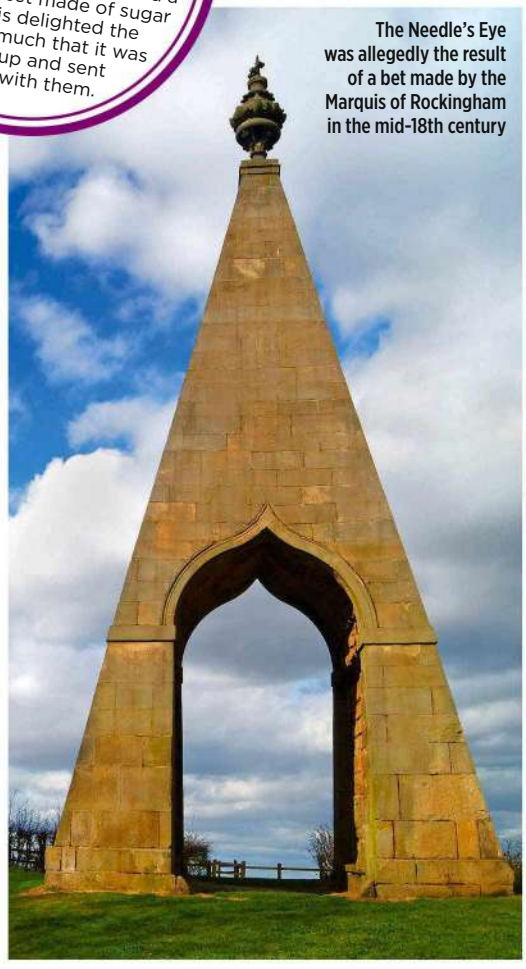
Sugar first arrived in Europe from the Middle East during the Middle Ages and very rapidly became a highly prized substance. Expensive to cultivate due to labour and transportation costs, it was only really available to those in the higher strata of European society. Aided by its supposedly medicinal properties, sugar was in high demand and the wealthy commissioned confectioners to create fabulous concoctions over which party-going nobility could marvel. Even when large-scale sugar plantations were established in the colonial West Indies, the price of sugar largely held steady and so remained unaffordable to those lower down the social spectrum – at least initially.

The wealthy simply accumulated more, the act of which helped maintain social standing. Indeed, chronic tooth decay was welcomed as a sign of substantial, and therefore supposedly admirable, sugar consumption.

DID YOU KNOW?

SWEET GESTURE

In 1527, Henry VIII's lord chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey, put on a spectacular feast for the French embassy that included a whole chess set made of sugar paste. This delighted the French so much that it was boxed up and sent home with them.



The Needle's Eye was allegedly the result of a bet made by the Marquis of Rockingham in the mid-18th century

FOLLIES

Follies – those ornamental structures designed to appear like buildings but which have little or no practical use – were *de rigueur* among the land-owning classes of western Europe from the late 16th century onwards, right into the Victorian era and beyond. The only real purpose they served was to showcase the wealth of those who had commissioned them, along with displaying their taste and artistic sense – or otherwise.

A famous example of such a folly is the Needle's Eye (*pictured left*), an archway in the shape of a pyramid that stands in the grounds of Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire. Legend has it that its construction was due to an alcohol-fuelled bet accepted by the estate's owner, the Marquis of Rockingham, in the mid-18th century. Having drunkenly announced he could drive a carriage through the eye of a needle, he promptly ordered the construction of this 14-metre-high structure with a sufficiently wide archway. It was a great expense to make to win an ill-conceived bet.

Of course, the word 'folly' suggests a foolish idea without worth or purpose. Indeed, the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "an ill-conceived, extravagant building or residence which often proves too costly to finish building or is otherwise ridiculed". The Marquis of Rockingham was one such builder.

TULIPS

The tulip embodied stature long before its introduction to western Europe in the 16th century. The flower's origins are located in the Middle East and it was first cultivated in Persia around the turn of the 11th century. In the Ottoman empire, sultans placed a tulip in their turbans as a symbol of prestige. Indeed, it was this practice, along with the general shape of the flower, that led to its name: 'tulipan' was a common Turkish pronunciation of 'turban'.

Although not merely the preserve of powerful sultans, the tulip was nonetheless revered during the Ottoman era and anyone found guilty of selling tulips beyond the city limits of Constantinople could be sent into exile. However, this did not prevent their passage to Europe, and in the late 16th century, some tulip bulbs made their way into the hands of the head gardener at the Austrian emperor's residence in Vienna. This horticulturalist, Carolus Clusius, not only began to cultivate the flower, but also wrote an influential book about it, thus spreading intrigue and interest in tulips.

Clusius would later take up a prestigious post at a Dutch university and thereafter the United Provinces (later known as the Netherlands) became synonymous with the flower. 'Tulipmania' broke out in Amsterdam in the mid-1630s when, fuelled by French enthusiasm for rare bulbs, prices skyrocketed. Demand for such a recognisable status symbol was so strong that a single bulb could change hands for more than the price of a townhouse on the banks of one of Amsterdam's canals.

MAIN: A painting by Bruegel the Younger highlights the absurdity of 'Tulipmania' by depicting the speculators as monkeys

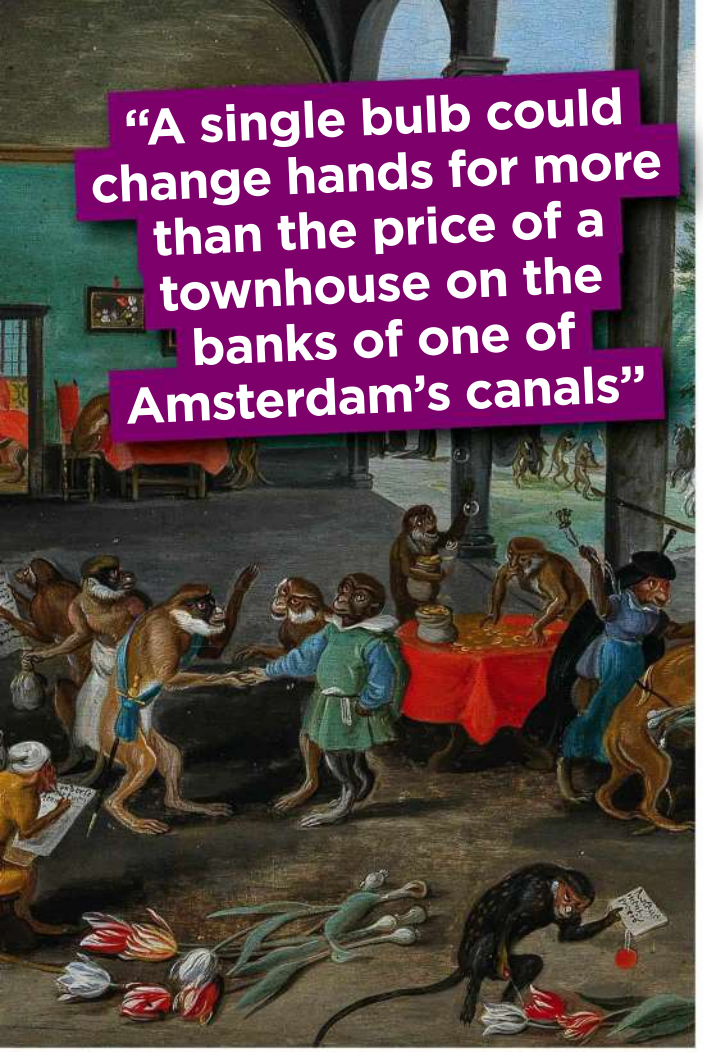
LEFT: Suleiman the Magnificent promoted the tulip as a symbol of prestige long before the 'Tulipmania' of the 17th century

One of many surviving examples of the Royal Game of Ur, believed to have been made during the third millennium BC

BOARD GAMES

Nowadays, every house has a plentiful supply of board games, usually fashioned cheaply from plastic and cardboard. It wasn't always thus. In ancient Egypt and the Middle East, the ownership of board games – particularly those constructed from the finest materials – could signify a person's importance in that society. They were also offered as gifts, either to influence those in power or as part of royal burials. During her lifetime, Queen Nefertari of Egypt owned a highly decorative version of the board game Senet, while another game, named the Royal Game of Ur in the 20th century after its discovery in southern Iraq, was another popular pastime. Not dissimilar to backgammon, five Royal Game of Ur boards were excavated by the British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley in the 1920s and 1930s. The most elaborate example, one that clearly belonged to someone of high ranking, was decorated with shells, red limestone and the blue rock known as lapis lazuli.

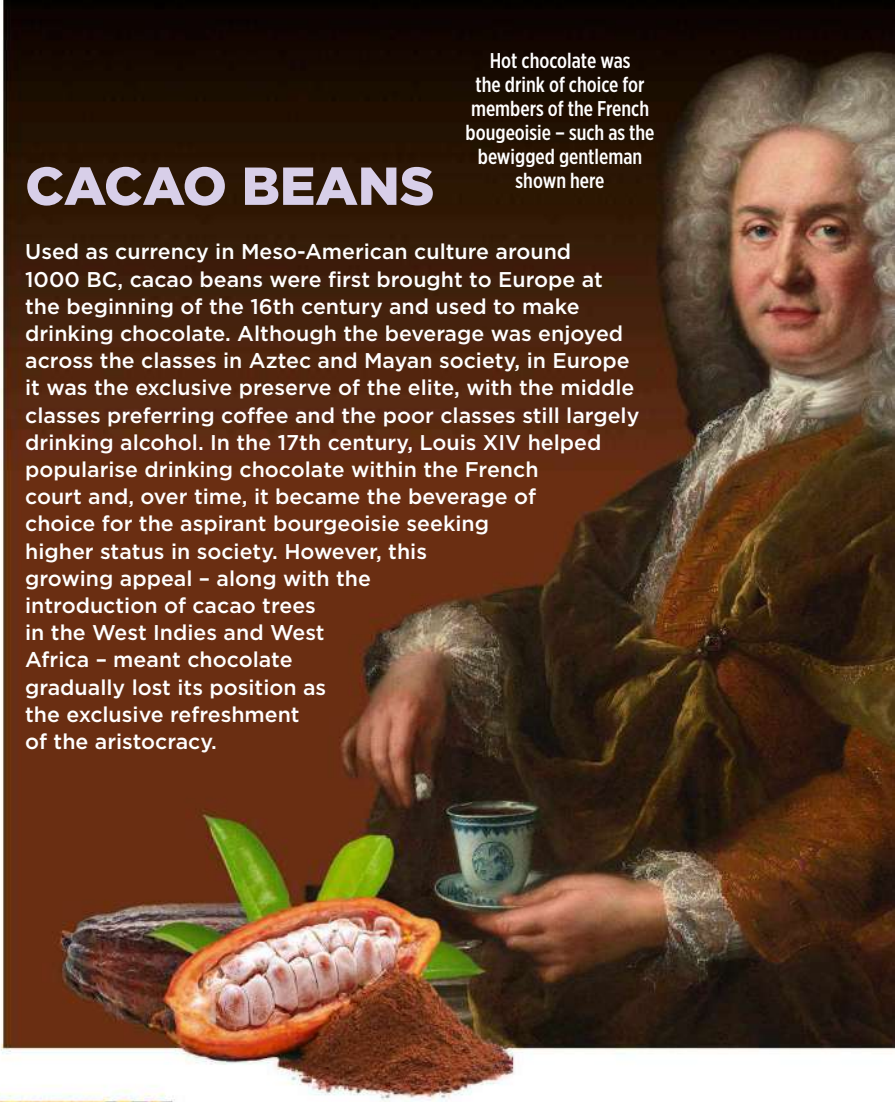
GETTY IMAGES X5, ALAMY X3



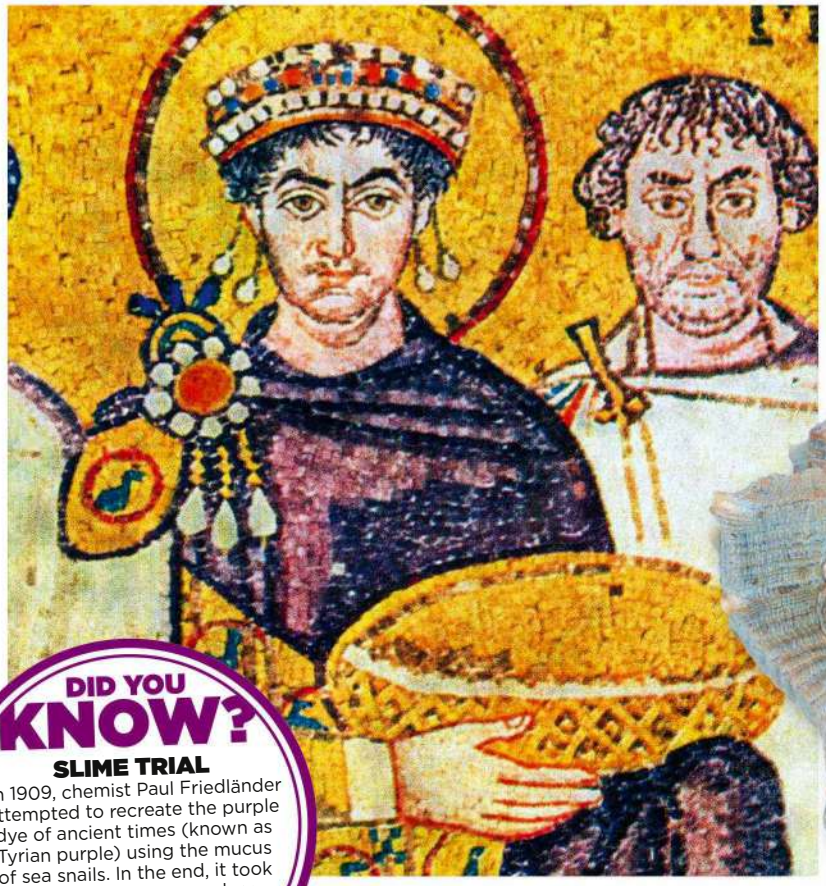
"A single bulb could change hands for more than the price of a townhouse on the banks of one of Amsterdam's canals"

CACAO BEANS

Used as currency in Meso-American culture around 1000 BC, cacao beans were first brought to Europe at the beginning of the 16th century and used to make drinking chocolate. Although the beverage was enjoyed across the classes in Aztec and Mayan society, in Europe it was the exclusive preserve of the elite, with the middle classes preferring coffee and the poor classes still largely drinking alcohol. In the 17th century, Louis XIV helped popularise drinking chocolate within the French court and, over time, it became the beverage of choice for the aspirant bourgeoisie seeking higher status in society. However, this growing appeal – along with the introduction of cacao trees in the West Indies and West Africa – meant chocolate gradually lost its position as the exclusive refreshment of the aristocracy.



Hot chocolate was the drink of choice for members of the French bougeoisie – such as the bewigged gentleman shown here



A mosaic shows Byzantine emperor Justinian I wearing a purple robe, which would have been dyed using mucus from predatory sea snails (the shell of such a specimen is shown right)

THE COLOUR PURPLE

Purple has been a colour denoting wealth, prestige and importance since antiquity. In both ancient Greece and Egypt, clothing dyed this shade was the preserve of emperors and kings. The more purple items that you owned and wore, the higher your position in society. The Roman empire had strict laws over how the colour could be worn and by whom. In 40 AD, the erratic emperor Caligula ordered the assassination of King Ptolemy of Mauretania, a move many believe to have been provoked by Ptolemy's wearing of a purple cloak, which Caligula interpreted as a threat to his rule. The Romans also used purple in some of their important buildings and statues, thanks to the colour of the igneous rock called imperial porphyry.

Since then, purple has continued to be regarded as a signifier of high standing because of its rarity; it was largely only harvested from the glands of sea snails. Its exclusivity declined from the mid-19th century onwards, thanks to the work of a teenage chemist named William Henry Perkin. While attempting to discover a cure for malaria, the Englishman inadvertently created a synthetic version of purple – called mauveine – which was then widely used as a clothing dye. Purple no longer belonged just to the elite.

DID YOU KNOW?

SLIME TRIAL

In 1909, chemist Paul Friedländer attempted to recreate the purple dye of ancient times (known as Tyrian purple) using the mucus of sea snails. In the end, it took 12,000 molluscs to produce a mere 1.4g of dye – only enough to colour a handkerchief.

WHAT GREAT PAINTINGS SAY

Nature and art collide dramatically in a watercolour created in one of the world's most beautiful cities

The Piazzetta, Venice

by JMW Turner, 1840

For centuries, the romance and beauty of Venice has inspired artists of all mediums – from Canaletto to Renoir, Monet to Dalí. Little surprise, then, that English Romantic painter JMW Turner fell in love with the city when he first visited in 1819, four years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, at a time when Venice was part of the Austrian empire.

"Turner only came to Venice three times, but the city recurs in his works over and over again," says Charlotte Topsfield, senior curator of British drawings and prints at the Scottish National Gallery. "And what could be a better subject for an artist who dedicated his life to studying light, air, atmosphere, and capturing the effects of light on water, than Venice?"

"Turner was an incredibly prolific and hardworking artist," she continues. "In August 1840, he spent two weeks in the city and created over 200 pencil sketches and as many as 150 watercolours – including this one. He turned his hotel room into a makeshift studio where he would add watercolour to the sketches he had made during the day and hang them up to dry all around his room."

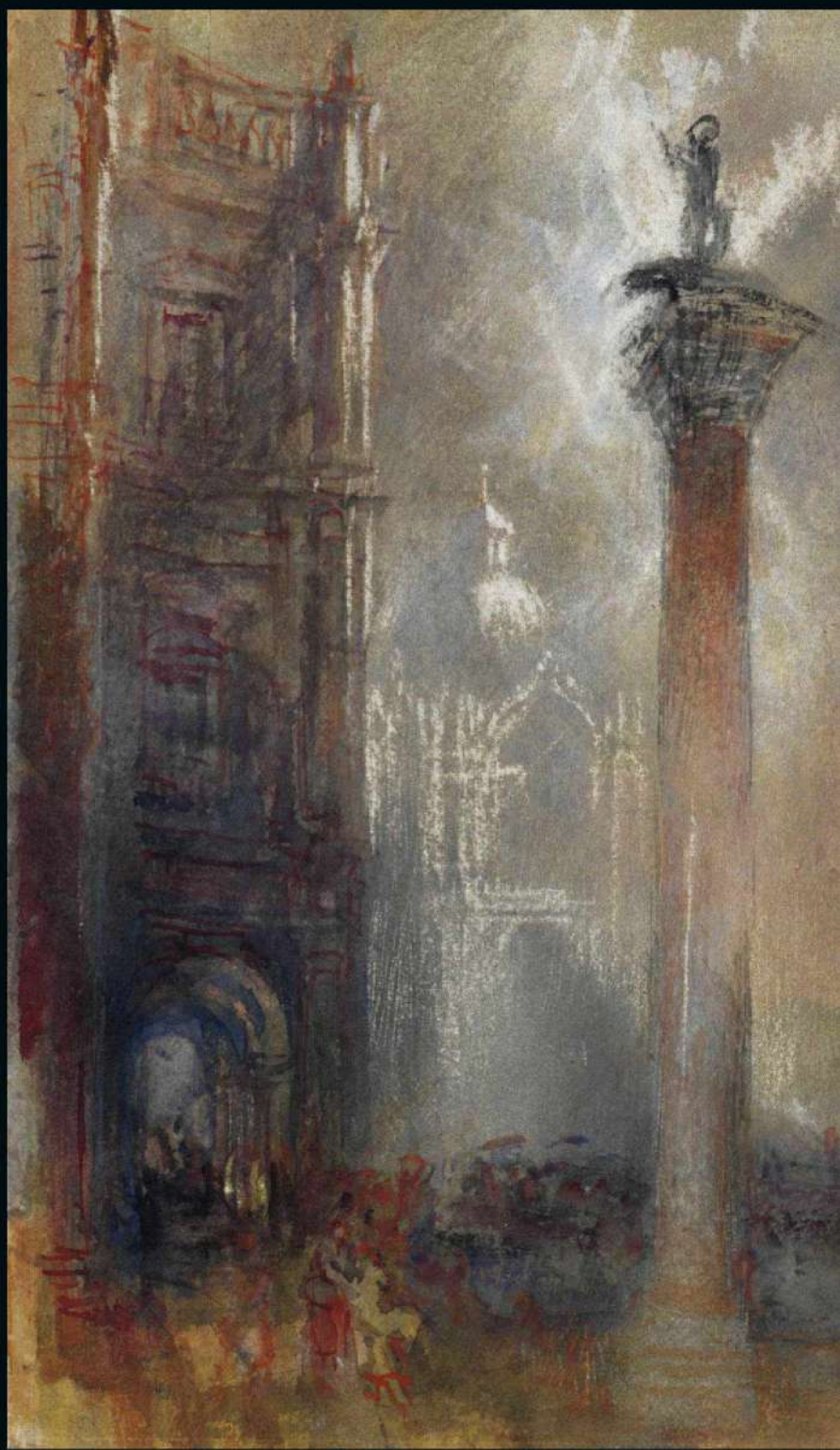
WATER AND LIGHT

Anyone familiar with Venice will immediately recognise the two huge columns that stand near the water, just off St Mark's Square: the winged lion of St Mark on the right and St Theodore on the left. Beneath the dark, brooding sky is the great Doge's Palace, with the ghostly domes of St Mark's Basilica in the background, illuminated by a streak of lightning that shoots across the sky.

"Turner was an incredibly innovative artist and he pushed the boundaries of watercolour technique," comments Topsfield. "The dramatic flash of lightning that makes this painting so extraordinary has been created by scratching through the pigment to expose the white of the paper beneath. There's a lovely account from the 1820s by someone who saw Turner painting; they describe how Turner had sharpened his thumbnail 'like an eagle's claw' for the purpose of scratching the surfaces of his works."

Turner continued to travel abroad in the 11 years that preceded his death, in 1851, but he never again returned to Venice, the city of water and light that had inspired such a surge of creativity in the summer of 1840.

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN



JMW TURNER (1775-1851) THE PIAZZETTA, VENICE, 1840. COLLECTION: NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND, HENRY VAUGHAN BEQUEST 1900

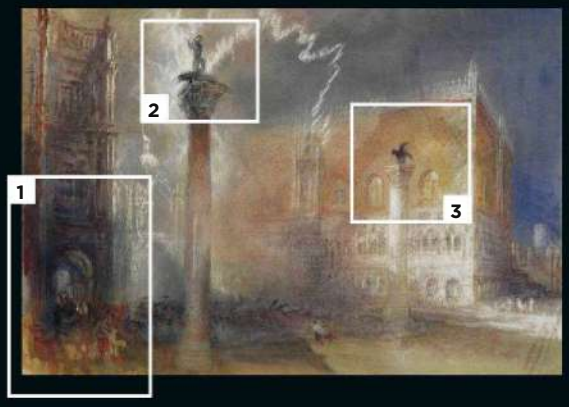
GET HOOKED

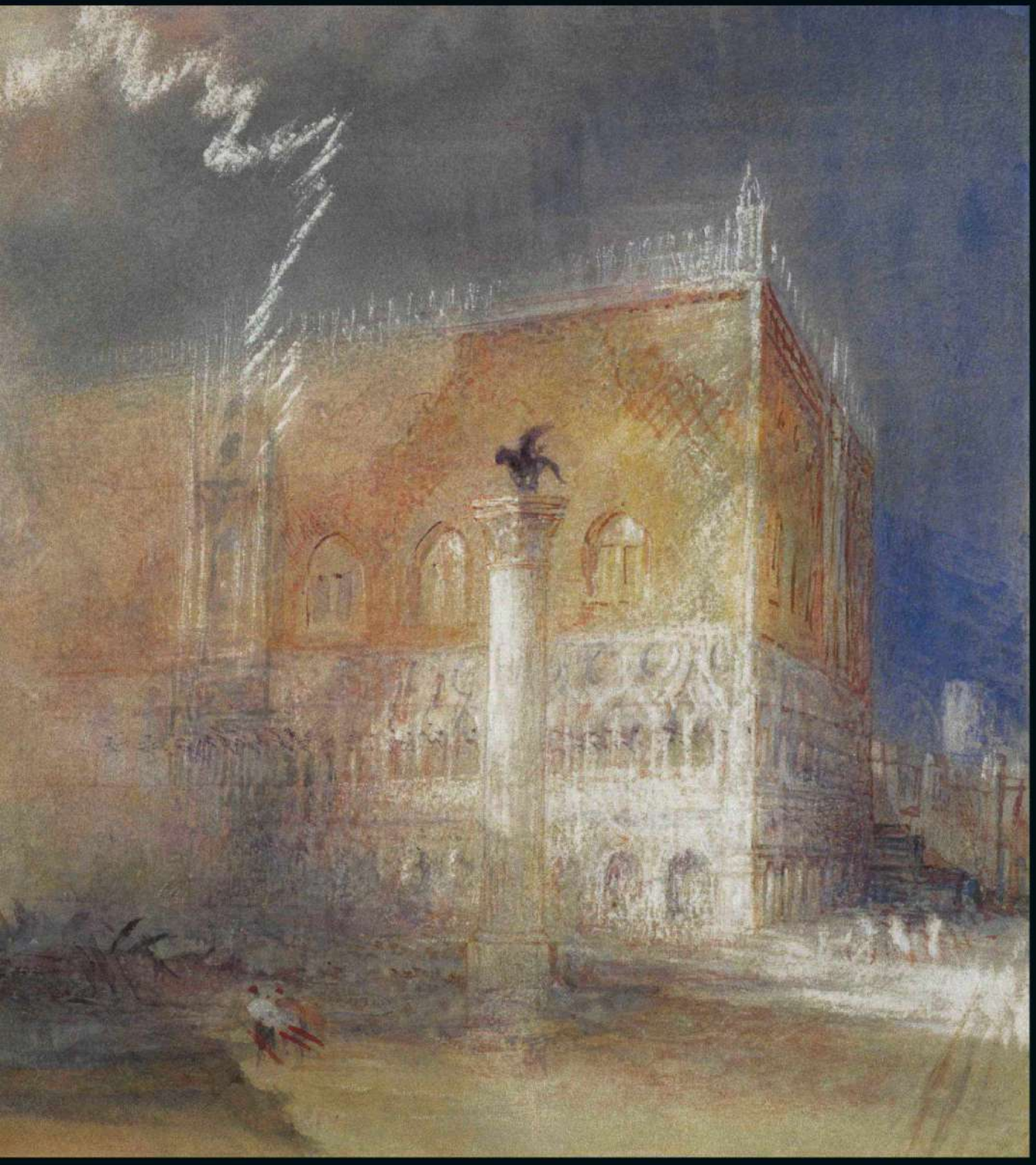
The Piazzetta, Venice, together with other works by JMW Turner, will be on show as part of the annual Turner in January exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, from 1–31 January 2023. Entry is free. Visit *nationalgalleries.org/exhibition/turner-january* for more details.

1. LIBRARY
The men and women depicted are fleeing for shelter in the arcade of the Library of Saint Mark – one of the earliest surviving public libraries in Italy, founded in 1468.

2. SAINT THEODORE
Saint Theodore was patron of Venice before Saint Mark. The warrior-saint is depicted atop the column erected in his name, standing over a crocodile meant to represent a slain dragon.

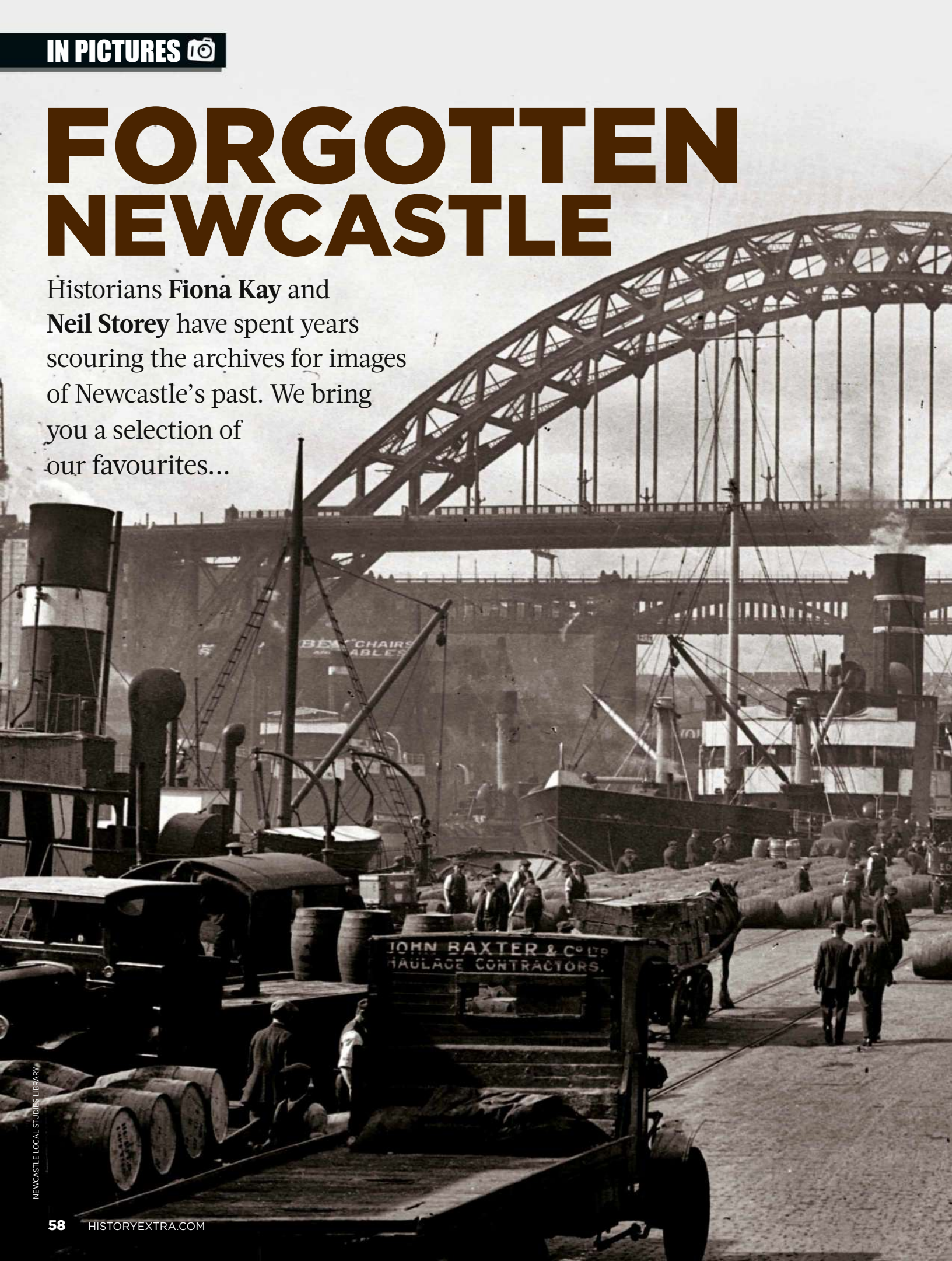
3. WINGED LION OF SAINT MARK AND THE DOGE'S PALACE
According to legend, Saint Mark was sheltering from a storm in Venice when he was visited in a dream by an angel in the form of a winged lion. The story inspired the statue on top of St Mark's Column, which Turner also depicts here. Behind it is the Doge's Palace, featuring brickwork that Turner replicated by scratching through the pigment – probably with a needle.





FORGOTTEN NEWCASTLE

Historians **Fiona Kay** and **Neil Storey** have spent years scouring the archives for images of Newcastle's past. We bring you a selection of our favourites...



NEWCASTLE LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY

QUAYSIDE, c1928

▼ Newcastle's quayside bustles with activity in the shadow of the newly completed Tyne Bridge. Taking nearly three years to build, the famous structure was, at the time of its construction, the world's longest single span bridge. Thousands gathered for its official opening ceremony on 10 October 1928, watching as King George V and Queen Mary became the first to travel across it in their landau horse-drawn carriage.

CATHEDRAL VIEW, c1890

◀ The living conditions within these old buildings, located on either side of Castle Garth – some dating from the 17th century – were often squalid and unsanitary, and housed some of the city's poorest residents. The famous 15th-century Lantern Tower of St Nicholas Cathedral can also be seen in the distance, looming over its surroundings.

MARCHING FOR REFORM, c1910

▼ Members of the Newcastle branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies – a movement that used peaceful methods such as petitioning and marching to gain the vote for women – carry out a demonstration on Northumberland Street. It wouldn't be until the Equal Franchise Act of 1928, though, that women (aged 21 and above) achieved the same voting rights as men.

INTO THE LIGHT, c1920

▲ A group of boys from one of the local coal mines pose for a photograph, some holding their safety lamps. The first restrictions to the employment of women and children in mines had been introduced in 1842, and from 1900, boys under the age of 13 were no longer permitted to work in mines underground.

NEWCASTLE LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY X5, MINERS IMAGE © THE NEIL STOREY ARCHIVE

CATCHING UP, c1890

▶ A group of women gather outside a row of tenements near Fenham Barracks, chatting, knitting, and carrying babies. Further up the street, some residents have even let their chickens out from their back yard coops to peck around the cobbles.

STAYING ON TRACK, c1895

▼ Railway navvies and engineers pause for a picture beside the huge railway crossing at Central Station. The station was officially opened by Queen Victoria in 1850, back when a train journey from London to Newcastle took nine hours.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT, 1911

▼ Newcastle schoolgirls practice their left-handed salute in preparation for a parade marking the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary, which took place on 22 June 1911.

BUSINESS AS USUAL, c1910

▲ Anyone who has got off a train at Central Station will likely be familiar with this view, looking up Grainger Street towards the city centre. Despite the rain, the tradespeople in this early 20th-century image go about their business under the watchful eye of a bobby on the beat.

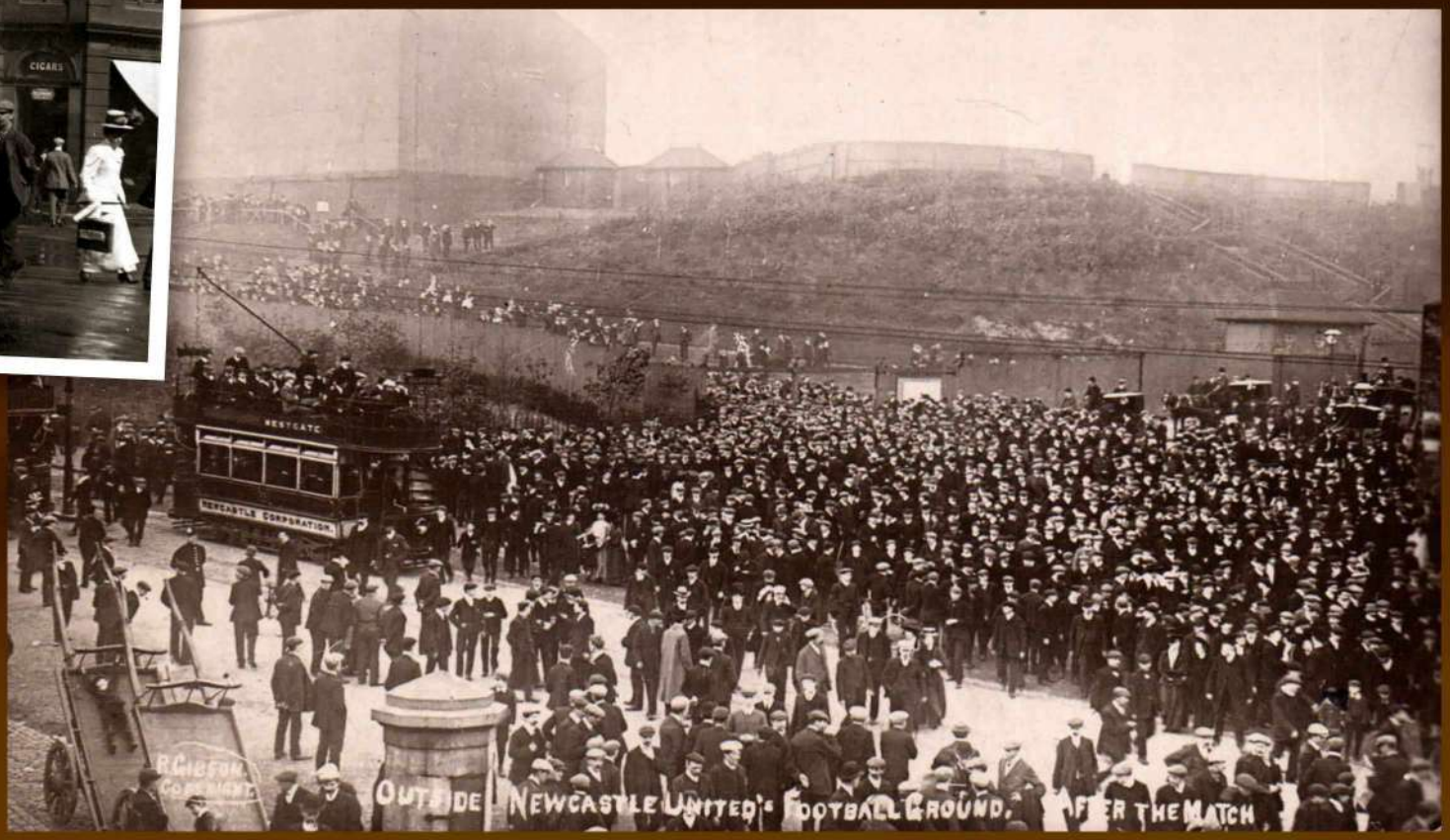
JUBILEE JOY, 1935

◀ A bustling Northumberland Street is shown decorated for the Silver Jubilee celebrations of King George V and Queen Mary. Now fully pedestrianised, the street once saw trams, buses and cars travel nose to bumper, with those on foot forced to dodge in between as they went about their shopping.

ROLL UP, ROLL UP, 1949

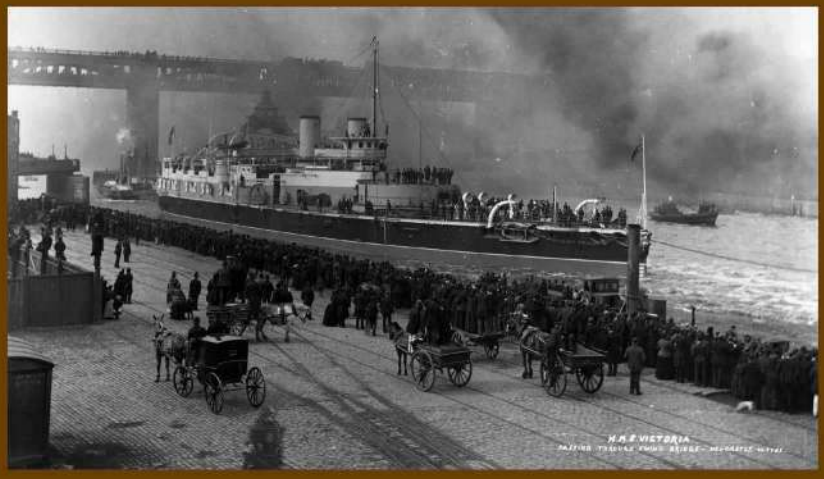
▶ Women get to work in the tobacco leaf preparation department at the John Sinclair Ltd factory on Bath Lane. And speed was of the essence: the year before this photograph was taken, a study found that 82 per cent of British men smoked, of whom 65 per cent smoked manufactured cigarettes.

NEWCASTLE LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY X5, ST JAMES'S PARK IMAGE © THE NEIL STOREY ARCHIVE



THE BEAUTIFUL GAME, c1910

▲ A crowd of supporters leave St James' Park after a match. A state-of-the-art football ground for its day, St James' had a capacity for crowds of up to 60,000 from 1905, and has been the home ground of Newcastle United FC since 1892. Although there is a small police presence here, most of the fans seem content to walk home peacefully, with the exception of one small boy (*bottom left*) who is clinging to a cart in the hopes of a ride.



ALL AT SEA, 1889

▲ HMS *Victoria* passes under the Swing Bridge on its way to complete sea trials, watched by crowds of onlookers. Launched in 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, the ship was built by the Armstrong, Mitchell company – then Newcastle's largest employer – at Elswick shipyard. At its launch, *Victoria* was the largest, fastest and most powerful ironclad afloat, but it was accidentally rammed during Royal Navy exercises in the eastern Mediterranean, in June 1893, and tragically sank. The ship's 358-strong crew, along with its captain, Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon, were all lost.

CHILD'S PLAY, c1900

▲ Children play in the street on Westmorland Road, Elswick, at the turn of the 20th century. Behind them, a horse-drawn milk cart can be seen on its round, as well as the Villa Victoria pub. ⊙

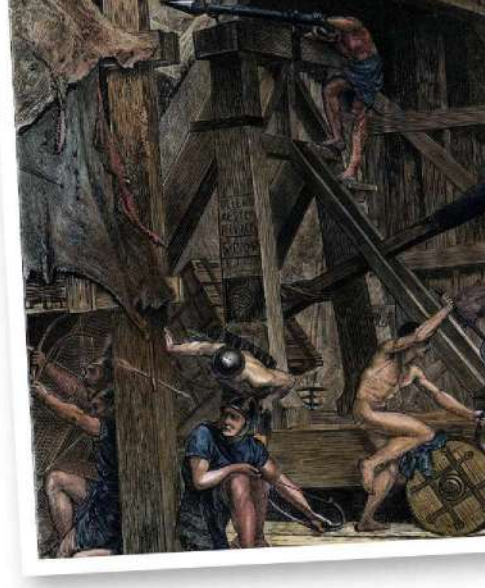
WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

GET HOOKED

READ

Geordie Newcastle: How We Used to Live, by Neil Storey and Fiona Kay, is on sale now (Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2021)

WHAT IF... HANNIBAL HAD TAKEN ROME?



Professor Greg Woolf talks to **Nige Tassell** about what might have happened to Rome and the Romans had the Carthaginian military mastermind managed to conquer the city

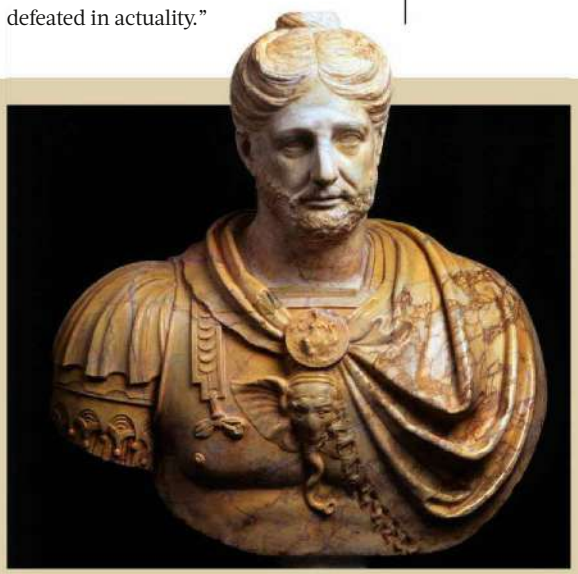
When he led his men and his elephants through the Alps in 218 BC, Hannibal had Rome firmly in his sights. But after several notable victories – most notably the Roman annihilation at Cannae two years later – and despite remaining on the Italian peninsula for the next 15 years, the Carthaginian general failed to conquer the city, suffering from a depletion in manpower and lacking the necessary equipment to breach Rome's city walls.

But what if Hannibal had been successful? How would European culture have been different? And would the Roman empire have still risen to dominate the continent for centuries? Greg Woolf – Ronald J Mellor professor of ancient history at the University of California, Los Angeles, whose books include *The Life and Death of Ancient Cities: A Natural History* (Oxford University Press, 2020) and *Rome: An Empire's Story* (Oxford University Press, 2012) – doesn't believe the Carthaginian capture of Rome would necessarily have meant the extinction of the Romans.

"The most likely scenario is that the Romans would have been forced into a humiliating peace, maybe had war indemnities imposed on them, and lost their leadership role in Italy. Rome was already a huge city by ancient standards at the time of the Hannibalic War, and it may have struggled to stay so large without its position of power. Most likely, we'd have seen a smaller, weaker city-state, much more like the Italian cities that had been defeated in actuality."

IN CONTEXT

The First Punic War ended in 241 BC, with Carthage, led by Hamilcar Barca, defeated by the Romans. The Second Punic War broke out 23 years later, when Barca's son, the military general Hannibal, marched his troops (and a large number of North African war elephants) over the Alps into Italy. Rather than attack Rome outright, Hannibal made gains in central and southern Italy, instead encouraging a civil revolt against the city-state. This suited the Romans, who were conscious of Hannibal's tactical prowess and simply picked minor skirmishes rather than a full-throttle battle. These smaller encounters would leave him short-armed and, without the required manpower commitment from Carthage, the general withdrew his men after 15 years in Italy.



A bust purportedly of Hannibal, now owned by a museum in Moscow. The general spent 15 years on the Italian peninsula, but never took Rome

Culturally, there may have been little difference had Rome fallen. Despite the Carthaginians speaking and writing the Semitic language of Punic, Professor Woolf doesn't believe this would have been imposed on their new territories. Greek would have remained the most common language across the ancient Mediterranean. Similarly, there would have been no religious upheaval: "Roman and Punic religion was pretty similar. They found it easy to recognise each other's gods."

BROAD BRUSHSTROKES

Then there's the issue of whether the capture of Rome would have been a springboard for further Carthaginian expansion. "It is a fair bet that they would have dominated the western Mediterranean in the second century BC," explains Professor Woolf, "and maybe extended their power in Spain and their influence in southern France."

But the kind of invasion of the British Isles that the Romans would carry out in AD 43 was unlikely to have been on the cards, although second-guessing the Carthaginians is a difficult pursuit, thanks to one episode in particular. "When Rome destroyed Carthage in 146 BC, it scattered its libraries, translating only one book – a massive guide to agriculture. As a result, we have no access to Carthaginian voices, and so we see them mostly through the eyes of their enemies: the Greeks of Sicily and then the Romans. We do not know what they wanted."

Subsequent studies of the Carthaginians, limited by the paucity of contemporaneous information about them, have tended to paint them with fairly broad brushstrokes – and largely portrayed them as traders, as opposed to the more violent Romans. Professor Woolf suggests the wholesale adoption of that portrait may be misguided.

"There's no real sign the Carthaginians were very calm. Older textbooks claim they were a merchant

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X1

ABOVE: **A painting imagines Hannibal leading his men into Italy in 218 BC, seated atop one of the war elephants that he is commonly associated with today**

TOP LEFT: **The Romans would later capture the city of Carthage in 146 BC, after a brutal siege that lasted nearly three years**

people, but there is probably a fair bit of anti-Semitic bias at work there. Ancient testimony makes it clear they were military conquerors, that they exploited conquered lands for grain, silver and manpower – just like the Romans, in fact. The earliest treaties between Rome and Carthage envisaged both cities as being military powers with some trade interests."

A ROMAN RECOVERY?

Despite the expansion of the Carthaginian empire, it remains unlikely that Hannibal had designs on improving his personal power by staking a claim to be made emperor as reward for his military victories. At this point, Carthage was ruled by a pair of *suffetes* (chief magistrates) elected annually, a situation that most likely would have remained unchanged whether Rome was conquered or not.

"Rome itself did not have emperors until two centuries after Hannibal's death," explains Professor Woolf. "There were occasional tyrants in Syracuse on Sicily, but the western Mediterranean mostly belonged to city-states in this period."

"IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HANNIBAL HAD DESIGNS ON IMPROVING HIS PERSONAL POWER BY STAKING A CLAIM TO BE MADE EMPEROR"

DID YOU KNOW?

THE LAST ELEPHANT

At the start of his journey across the Alps, Hannibal had 40 war elephants at his disposal. However, the tough conditions meant that only one of the animals (which were mainly used for charging at the enemy and instilling a sense of panic) survived the ordeal.

It remains a moot point as to whether the fall of Rome to Hannibal would have precluded the Roman empire ever rising and expanding to the extent it subsequently did. As Professor Woolf concludes, the permanence of Carthaginian rule would have been far from set in stone.

"It is perfectly possible that Rome might have fallen to Hannibal and then recovered. The Romans themselves believed that they had survived disasters in the past, and that they were strongest when their backs were against the wall. The Gauls sacked Rome in the early 4th century BC but Rome bounced back. Hannibal's victory at Cannae was remembered both as Rome's darkest hour and the moment when Roman politics worked better than any time before or since. Hannibal was a scary bugbear for a long time, but he was also remembered as the man who didn't know how to make the most of his success." ⊙

LISTEN
Philip Freeman, professor of humanities at Pepperdine University, California, discusses Hannibal's life on the *HistoryExtra* podcast: *historyextra.com/hannibal-podcast*

NEXT MONTH
What if the Schlieffen Plan had worked?

Try 3 issues for £5*

Subscribe to *BBC History Magazine* and explore the historical background to the world of today

Subscribe to Britain's bestselling history magazine

GETTY IMAGES

Your special introductory offer:

- Receive your first **3 issues for only £5**
- All subscribers get **FREE** access to **HistoryExtra.com**
- **Risk free trial offer** – you may cancel your subscription at any time.
- **Free UK delivery** direct to your door, at no extra charge!
- **Never miss an issue** of Britain's best-selling history magazine

* Offer open to new UK customers subscribing to the print edition only. Full details of the Direct Debit Guarantee are available on request. After your first 3 issues, your subscription will continue at £24.99 every 6 issues, saving 36% off the shop price thereafter. We reserve the right to reject or cancel subscriptions at any point if the customer has previously cancelled their subscription during the trial period for that magazine or any other magazine in the Immediate Media portfolio. Your subscription will start with the next available issue. Your HistoryExtra.com access will continue to be free as part of your magazine subscription and will come to an end if you decide to cancel your print subscription at any time.
Offer ends 31st December 2023.

+ UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances if offered by your phone tariff. Outside of free call packages calls charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open 9am–5pm weekdays. Overseas readers call +44 1604 973 723

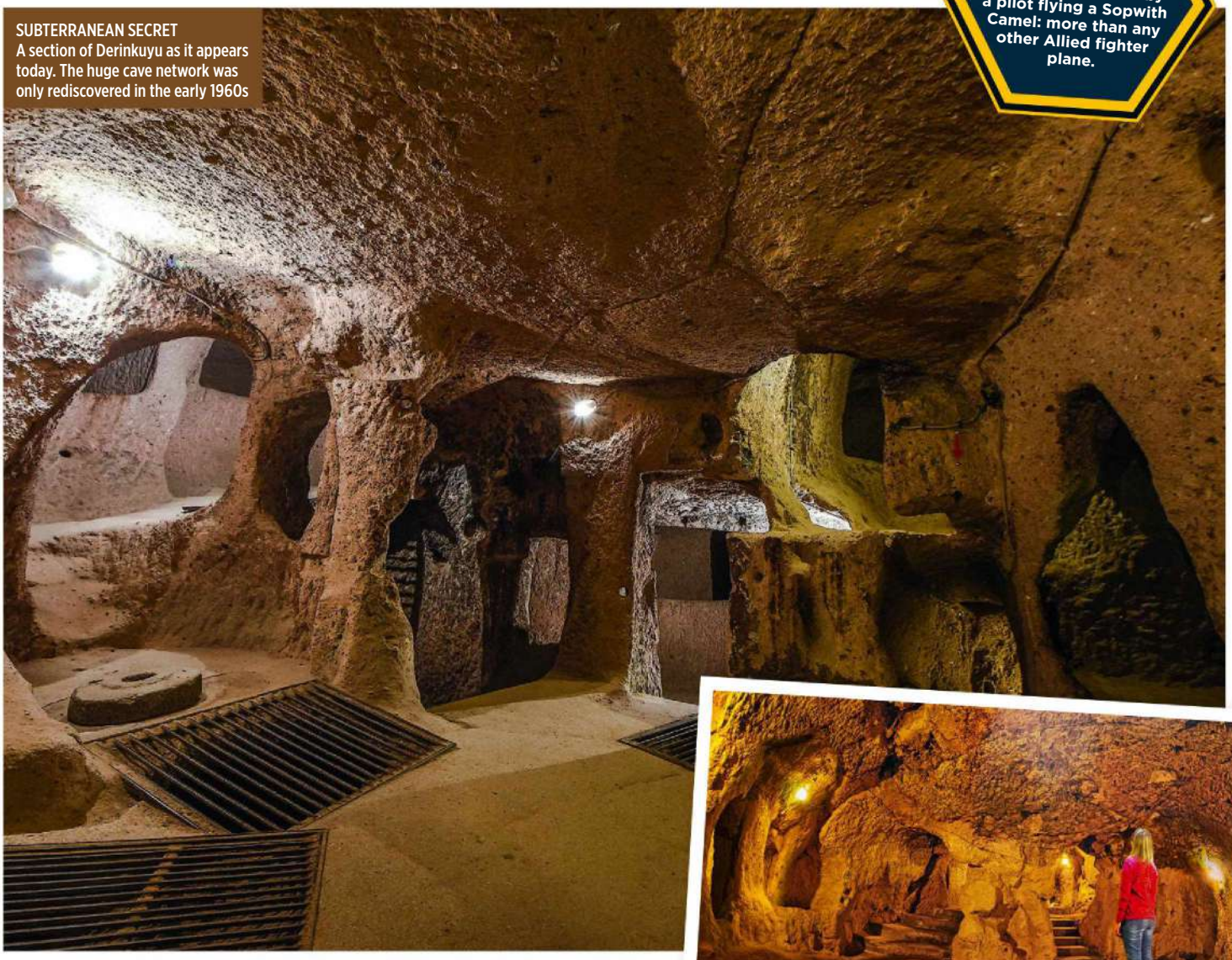
SCAN THIS TO ORDER NOW

or VISIT **www.buysubscriptions.com/HTHA23**

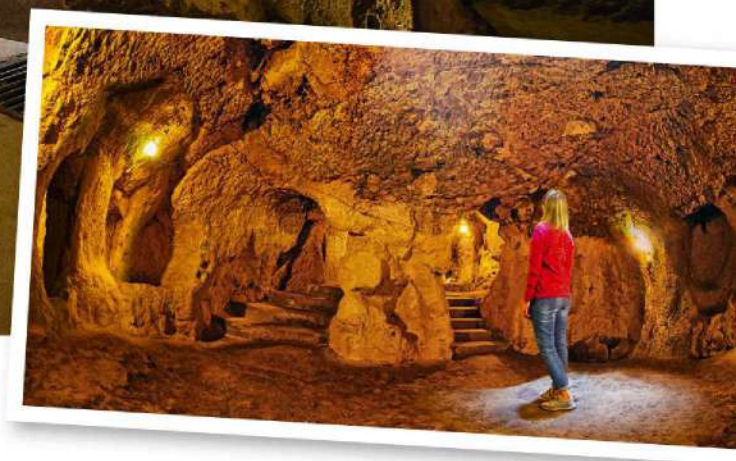
or CALL **03330 162 115**+ quoting HTHA23

1,294

The number of enemy aircraft officially shot down during World War I by a pilot flying a Sopwith Camel: more than any other Allied fighter plane.



SUBTERRANEAN SECRET
A section of Derinkuyu as it appears today. The huge cave network was only rediscovered in the early 1960s



GOING UNDERGROUND
The city is now a major tourist attraction, drawing thousands of visitors to Turkey's historic Cappadocia region each year

How was Derinkuyu underground city discovered?

SHORT ANSWER Strange things can be found during house renovations – a city fit for 20,000 people, for instance

LONG ANSWER Beneath the volcanic rock of Nevşehir Province, Turkey, a vast warren of tunnels and chambers has existed for many thousands of years. It was once the sprawling underground city of Derinkuyu, which was expertly carved, expanded and lived in by a long line of different peoples, from the ancient Hittites around the 12th century BC to a variety of Christian groups during the Byzantine period.

Historically known as Elengubu, it was the largest of the surprisingly numerous subterranean cities in the region: delving down 85 metres – and 18 levels – was a fully functioning settlement, complete with food stores, stables, ventilation systems, wells and a high-vaulted space used as a religious school. At its peak, Derinkuyu was home to 20,000 people, who descended into the elaborate cave system to hide from invading forces.

Given the sheer size of the site, it was hardly likely to be forgotten and accidentally discovered behind, say, someone's house, was it? Except that's exactly what happened. In 1963, a local man knocked down a wall when renovating his home and broke through into a tunnel, revealing the labyrinthine landmark beyond. And that was merely the first of the 600-plus entrances into Derinkuyu that have since been discovered.

GETTY IMAGES X2

DEFENSIVE MEASURE
A ditch at the Fort of São Vicente – the first of more than 150 forts to be built as part of the Lines of Torres Vedras

What were the Lines of Torres Vedras?

SHORT ANSWER In the Napoleonic Wars, the Duke of Wellington drew a line in the sand. Or several lines, across Portugal

LONG ANSWER In 1810, Napoleon's army launched a major offensive in Portugal, which threatened to swing momentum in the Peninsular War and force the Duke of Wellington's troops into retreat. The defence of Lisbon was on the line – or, as it turned out, on several lines.

The previous year, Wellington had embarked on an ambitious project (based on an idea by Portuguese commander José Maria das Neves Costa) to build two unbroken defensive lines across Portugal, made up of forts, trenches, escarpments and redoubts, and making the most of the mountainous terrain. A third line would ring Lisbon.

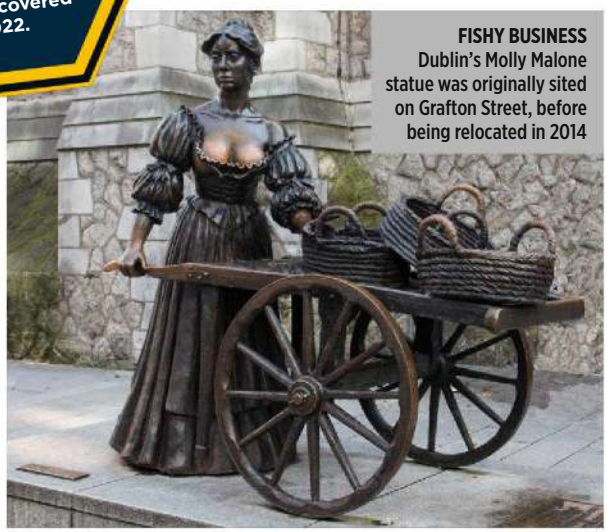
Named after a nearby town, the Lines of Torres Vedras were a truly remarkable feat of engineering, and, perhaps most impressively of all, constructed entirely in secret. Napoleon's forces had no idea they even existed until they marched up to the first line. Failing to break through, they retreated in March 1811.

75
The number of years that an abstract work by Dutch artist Piet Mondrian was revealed to have been hanging upside down when the mistake was finally discovered in 2022.

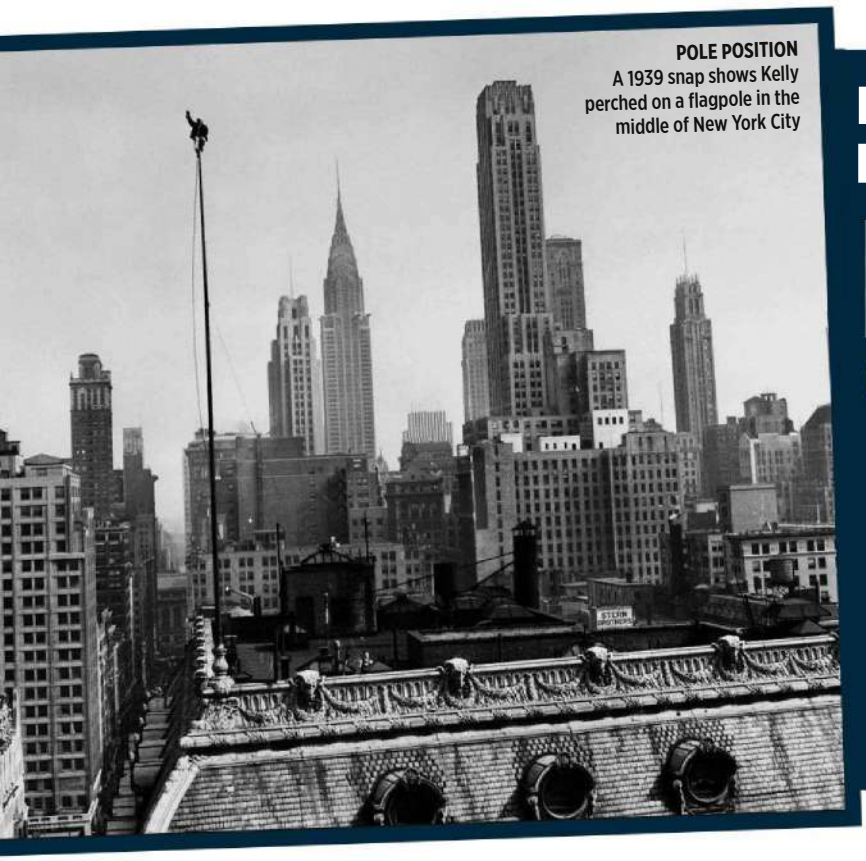
Was Molly Malone a real person?

SHORT ANSWER The Irish fishmonger was probably never really "alive, alive oh"

LONG ANSWER Anyone walking along Suffolk Street in Dublin will come across the bronze statue of a woman wheeling a basket-laden cart. It is Molly Malone, something of a folk hero in the Irish capital, and the subject of a beloved song about a pretty fishmonger who sells her wares by crying "cockles and mussels, alive, alive oh". Although it is often said she lived in the 17th century, there is no categorical proof that the song was based on a real person. It didn't appear until the late 18th century, anyway. But that didn't stop 13 June being declared Molly Malone Day in 1988 – the same year the statue was erected – after records of a Mary Malone had been found, who had died on 13 June 1699.



FISHY BUSINESS
Dublin's Molly Malone statue was originally sited on Grafton Street, before being relocated in 2014



POLE POSITION
A 1939 snap shows Kelly perched on a flagpole in the middle of New York City

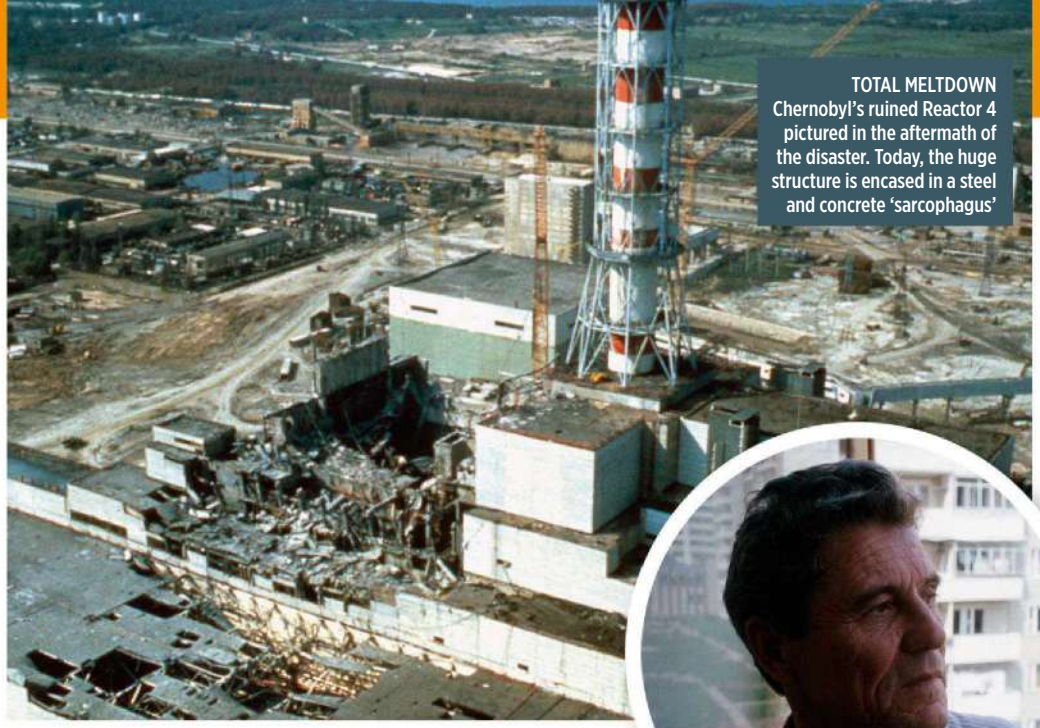
How did pole sitting become popular?

SHORT ANSWER Well, Alvin 'Shipwreck' Kelly certainly came up with a distinctive way to promote a movie

LONG ANSWER As crazes go, pole sitting was not exactly a thrilling spectator event, yet people in the United States in the 1920s seemed to enjoy watching someone perch on top of a wooden pole and sit there for as long as they could. It rose to such heights (sorry) thanks to Alvin 'Shipwreck' Kelly, a stunt man who carried out a sitting in 1924 for 13 hours and 13 minutes to publicise a movie. He went on to tour the country, and a veritable party of pole sitters joined in the fun.

Kelly's greatest achievement came in 1930 when he sat on a 69-metre-high pole in Atlantic City for 49 days and one hour, living off coffee and cigarettes and tying himself to the pole while he slept. He later calculated that he had spent 20,613 hours doing what he loved before the Great Depression brought everyone else's love of the fad to an end.

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X4



TOTAL MELTDOWN
Chernobyl's ruined Reactor 4 pictured in the aftermath of the disaster. Today, the huge structure is encased in a steel and concrete 'sarcophagus'

FALLOUT PLOY
The plant's manager, Viktor Bryukhanov, was forced to shoulder much of the blame

Who was blamed for Chernobyl?

SHORT ANSWER The Soviets needed scapegoats, like Viktor Bryukhanov and Anatoly Dyatlov

LONG ANSWER When a flawed and mishandled experiment at Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, Ukraine, caused one of the reactors to explode in the early hours of 26 April 1986, the result was the world's worst nuclear disaster. The radioactive fallout spread across Europe, while the political fallout helped bring down the Soviet Union.

In the aftermath, the authorities needed to make examples of some of Chernobyl's leading figures, chief among them Viktor Bryukhanov, who had helped build and run the plant. Although not present at the time, he arrived shortly after the explosion and, based on the information he received, sent word to Moscow that the reactor was still intact.

Bryukhanov stood trial for negligence and gross violation of safety regulations, alongside chief engineer Nikolai Fomin and Anatoly Dyatlov, the irascible deputy chief engineer actually in control of the disastrous experiment. All were sentenced to 10 years in prison camps. Shorter sentences went to station shift supervisor Boris Rogozhkin, reaction division chief Alexander Kovalenko, and inspector Yuri Laushkin.

Human error unquestionably played a part in the disaster, but Chernobyl was caused by systemic failings: in design, safety protocols and oversight, and made all the worse by the Soviet Union's bungled attempts to cover up and downplay the nuclear catastrophe.

DID YOU KNOW?

DOCTOR DOCTOR

After being shot in 1881, US president James Garfield was treated by a doctor whose name was Doctor Willard Bliss. Earlier in his career, Dr Doctor Bliss had treated Zachary Taylor, who went on to become president himself.

DANUBE DICTATORS

In 1913, Vienna's residents included three future dictators: Adolf Hitler (then a struggling young artist), Joseph Stalin (who had recently escaped exile in Siberia) and Joseph Tito (a factory worker destined to lead Yugoslavia).

SAY PRUNES

Before 'say cheese' became the norm, early photographers encouraged their subjects to say 'prunes'. This was deemed important for women, as the word tightened the lips to form "a pretty expression of the mouth".

FATAL DELAY

In 1797, the founder of the Qajar dynasty in Iran, Agha Mohammad Khan, sentenced two servants to death for being too loud, but postponed the execution for 24 hours, citing religious grounds. That night, the servants killed him in his sleep.

Did European women go on crusade?

SHORT ANSWER They were mostly pilgrims or following the men, but women were not always spared the fighting

LONG ANSWER While there is no question that crusading was a male pursuit, women certainly travelled to the Holy Land, and there is evidence that some noblewomen and queens even took the cross, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine. Most women, though, were there as background staff: servants, animal handlers, and a larger number of prostitutes than should be expected from pious, chivalric knights.

Accompanying crusaders meant putting themselves in danger, so women were sometimes called upon to defend themselves in desperate situations. According to a poem, a commoner named Margaret of Beverley was in Jerusalem when Saladin besieged the city in 1187, and was forced to protect herself with a cauldron for a helmet.

CRUSADER QUEEN
Eleanor of Aquitaine went to the Holy Land while married to King Louis VII of France

Did SS personnel have blood type tattoos?

SHORT ANSWER Yes, although those who avoided getting inked would have counted themselves lucky

LONG ANSWER Officially, all those serving in the Waffen-SS during World War II had to have a tattoo denoting their blood type – a small bit of ink on their left bicep near the armpit. The reasoning was that it would assist medical staff when it came to treating the wounded. Not everyone had a tattoo, though, such as members of the non-military branches of the SS, and sometimes other German soldiers ended up with a tattoo if they were treated in an SS hospital. The idea ultimately backfired, as the Allies used the tattoos to identify SS personnel after the war.

NOW YOU SEE IT...
Variations of the cups and balls routine have been performed since antiquity

29

Out of 59 men accused of witchcraft in the Pays de Caux region of France, 29 were shepherds – a far more common look for a witch in 17th-century Normandy than an old woman.

What was the first recorded magic trick?

SHORT ANSWER Now a magician's staple, the cups and balls routine wowed Egyptian audiences (or at least Roman ones)

LONG ANSWER It should be stated at the outset that this question does not concern the magic rituals or spells evidenced in many, many civilisations in human history, but a piece of performing trickery. So, less shaman or wizard, more stage magician.

The earliest proponent may have been a man named Dedi. There is a slightly woolly theory that a painting in an ancient Egyptian tomb dated c2700–c2500 BC shows him doing the classic cups and balls routine. According to the *Westcar Papyrus*, a collection of stories from the second millennium BC, Dedi also found fame for a more complex trick: decapitating animals, such as geese, and reattaching their heads without causing any harm.

If Dedi wasn't the first magician (the meaning of that painting has long been disputed), then the accolade instead goes to the Acetabularii, a group of magical men from ancient Rome who are also said to have gained 'oohs' and 'aahs' for performing the cups and balls routine.

Where does the phrase 'touch wood' come from?

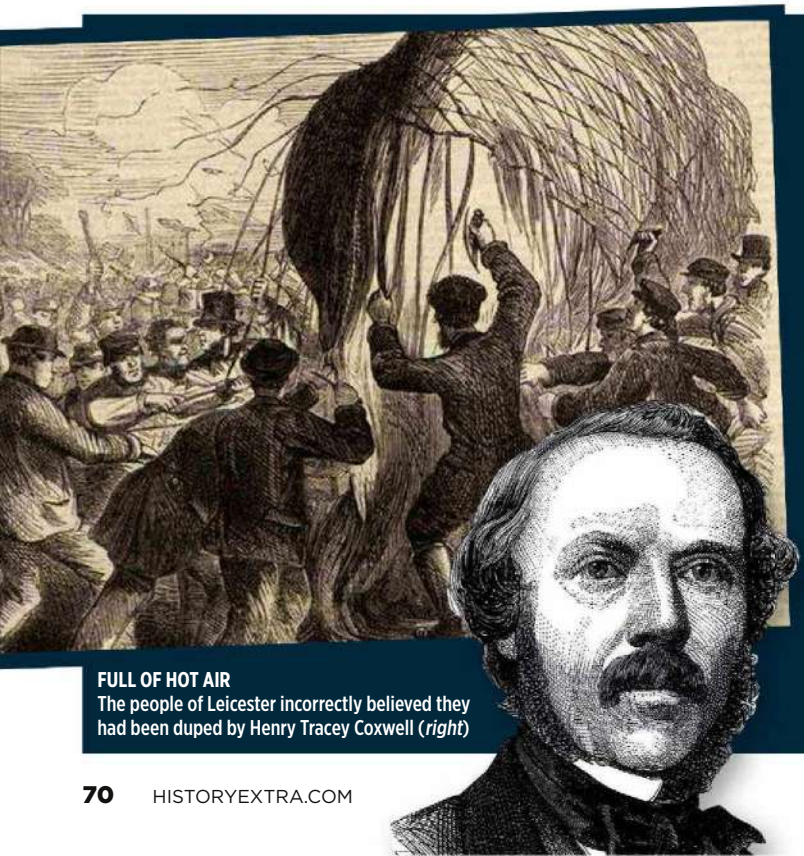
SHORT ANSWER Paganism or playtime? Wood-residing spirits or high-spirited games?

LONG ANSWER The superstition of tapping a piece of wood – often accompanied by saying the phrase 'knock on wood' or 'touch wood' – is used by people around the world either to see off bad luck or in the hope that something will come to pass. There are two possible explanations for the tradition: one ancient, and one slightly less so.

The first explanation is said to come from the pagan belief that spirits could be found lurking in trees, so knocking on a piece of wood either called upon the friendly folkloric figures or chased away malign ones. It's a neat story, but it doesn't explain why the phrase became widespread relatively recently. Instead, the strange superstition may have emerged from a 19th-century children's game named Tiggy Touchwood, where players were 'safe' from being caught if – you guessed it – they were touching a piece of wood.

WOOD YOU BELIEVE IT?
The superstitious ritual of 'touching wood' could have pagan origins

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X5



FULL OF HOT AIR
The people of Leicester incorrectly believed they had been duped by Henry Tracey Coxwell (*right*)

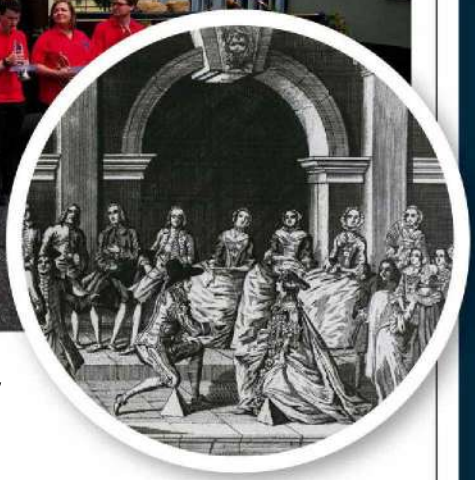
What caused the 'Great Balloon Riot' of 1864?

SHORT ANSWER An erroneous rumour turned a day watching a balloon flight into a balloon fight

LONG ANSWER On a summer's day in 1864, a 50,000-strong crowd gathered in Leicester's Victoria Park to see celebrity aviator Henry Tracey Coxwell take to the skies to test his new balloon, *Britannia*. The upbeat mood soured, however, when a rumour spread that he had not brought his biggest or best balloon at all. People swarmed the enclosure and some started clambering into the basket. "One person seated in my car was a disgrace to his town, as by his gestures and foul language he excited the mob and induced the belief that there existed on my part a disinclination to ascend," Coxwell later said. He abandoned the flight and let out the gas, but the now-outraged crowd started attacking the deflating balloon. They also attacked Coxwell himself before he made his escape.

In the aftermath of the riot, the people of Leicester picked up a new, and not wholly appreciated, nickname: Balloonatics.

QUITE A PIG DEAL
Volunteers parade a flitch of bacon through the streets of Great Dunmow during the 2016 trials



When did the Dunmow Flitch Trials begin?

SHORT ANSWER Married couples have tried to take home the bacon for more than 900 years, if the legend is true

STRAIGHT TO THE POINT
Couples are made to kneel on a pair of sharp stones while taking the Flitch Oath

LONG ANSWER Every leap year, the Essex market town of Great Dunmow hosts one of the most unusual sets of 'trials' in Britain. Over the course of a single day, usually in July, married couples come before a judge and a jury made up of 12 'maidens' and 'bachelors' to put forward their case that in the last year and a day they have not wished to be unwed.

If they are found to be a true and loving couple, their reward is a flitch of bacon (a side of a pig), a parade down the street in the Flitch Chair, and the chance to take the traditional Flitch Oath, something like a marriage vow done while kneeling on pointed stones. The unsuccessful couples don't miss out, though: they go home with a prize of gammon.

While the origins of the Flitch Trials aren't officially known, a popular legend states that they began in 1104 when the Augustinian prior at Little Dunmow presented a flitch to a local nobleman and his wife in recognition of their devotion. By the 14th century the custom was famous enough to appear in *The Vision of Piers Plowman* by William Langland – notable for being the earliest literary reference to Robin Hood – and 'The Wife of Bath's Tale' in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

When did guinea pigs come to Europe?

SHORT ANSWER Coffee and chocolate weren't the only things to come from the New World

A FURRY FRIEND
This c1580 painting by an unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist features the earliest-known depiction of a guinea pig

LONG ANSWER In 2013, London's National Portrait Gallery revealed what is now thought to be the first painting of a guinea pig. It depicts three children from the Elizabethan period, with one holding the animal. Guinea pigs had first been brought to Europe by 16th-century traders returning from South America: originating from the Andes region, the furry creatures had been domesticated there as early as 5000 BC – not, as their name suggests, from Guinea on Africa's west coast. Their rarity made them exotic pets for the nobility, from the three children in the aforementioned painting to Queen Elizabeth I herself.

What was a juryeonggu?

SHORT ANSWER A Korean drinking game gave new meaning to the term 'loaded dice'

LONG ANSWER It resembles something you would find in a modern tabletop game, but the ancient Korean *juryeonggu* wasn't used for playing anything like Dungeons & Dragons. Dating from the Unified Silla period (c668–935 AD), the 14-sided die was used in drinking games, with each side bearing an instruction to be carried out when rolled. These included "Drinking three glasses of liquor at one time", "Finishing an entire cup while interlocking arms with a companion" and "Staying still without flinching even when one's face is tickled".

The only known example of a *juryeonggu* was discovered in 1975 during an archaeological dig at the historic site of Gyeongju, but it was accidentally destroyed during preservation efforts. Luckily, several photos had already been taken, which enabled replicas to be made.

YOU GOTTA ROLL WITH IT
A replica *juryeonggu* – the only known original example was accidentally destroyed

SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS

facebook.com/HistoryExtra
twitter.com/HistoryExtra
@HistoryExtra

MORE Q&A ONLINE

Visit ***historyextra.com*** for more astounding history mysteries.

HISTORY EXTRA

UNLOCK FREE ACCESS TO HISTORYEXTRA.COM

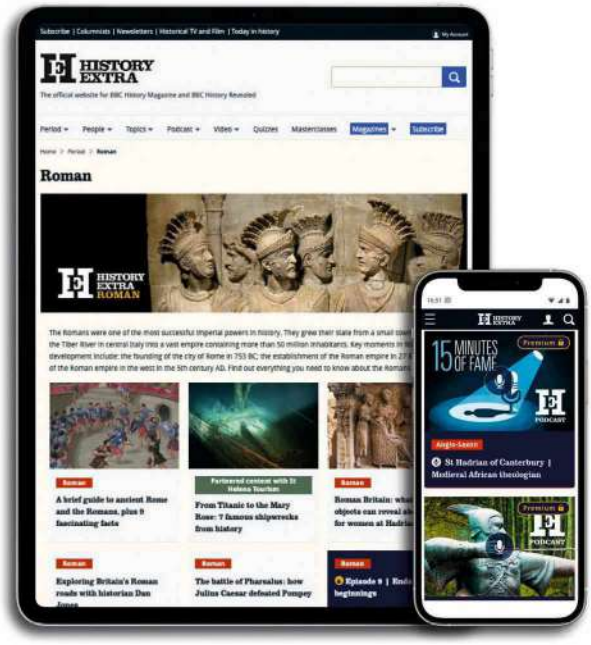
***BBC History Revealed* print subscribers can now enjoy unlimited access to HistoryExtra.com completely free.* Log in today and make the most of your subscription.**

Read
Explore thousands of features written by expert historians

Watch
Get access to on-demand video lectures

Listen
Tune in to over 1,000 episodes of our award-winning podcast

Download
Browse an exciting range of digital history magazines



PLUS, download the ad-free **HistoryExtra app** – available exclusively for subscribers. You will need to first unlock your access via HistoryExtra.com to use the app

Try now at historyextra.com/FREEACCESS or scan the QR code

1. Scroll down the page and select 'unlock today'
2. Log in or create an account with your email address
3. Add your subscriber number when prompted – this can be found on the paperwrap of your magazine or in your print subscription confirmation email.

* Your HistoryExtra.com access will continue to be free as part of your magazine subscription and will come to an end if you decide to cancel your print subscription at any time.

Not yet a BBC History Revealed subscriber? Turn to page 22 to subscribe

ONE TO WATCH

Leo Suter reprises his role as Harald Sigurdsson in another gory offering of *Vikings: Valhalla*

The drama also stars Frida Gustavsson as Erikson's warrior sister, Freydís Eiríksdóttir

Blood and guts

Vikings: Valhalla / Netflix, streaming now

At around the same time as *Vikings: Valhalla* debuted last year, Netflix announced there would be a second and then third series. It's easy to see why. Although you would guess that much day-to-day life in the 11th century consisted of muddy subsistence agriculture, showing due respect to local bigwigs, and worrying about nasty diseases, life for explorer Leif Erikson (Sam Corlett) is considerably more exciting.

Which isn't to say it's easy, and here we should warn you that mild spoilers for season one, which is also available to stream, lie ahead. If the first season was underpinned by the idea of Erikson, son of Erik the Red, the founder of the first Norse settlement in Greenland, making his way amongst the great and good of Viking society, the second series begins with Leif solitary and grieving following traumatic events at Kattegat.

Meantime, Leif's headstrong warrior sister, Freydís Eiríksdóttir (Frida Gustavsson) and Harald Sigurdsson (Leo Suter) have found temporary happiness by hiding away in the woods. Of course, this rural idyll cannot last. Not when Freydís is a woman whose future seems to be mystically linked to her paganism and Harald, a Nordic prince, remains a man determined to claim a throne despite recent setbacks.

Vikings: Valhalla isn't always subtle. Indeed, when it really gets on a roll, it can make *The Last Kingdom*, a series similarly preoccupied with destiny and the clash of religious beliefs, seem like arthouse cinema. However, it is highly entertaining, albeit not for those who flinch at onscreen violence.

It's also a series rooted in the historical record without being shackled by it. And as well as featuring some fascinating characters – none more so than King Canute (Bradley Freegard), a man who won the throne in England by force yet is remembered as a wise ruler – it reminds us how what we think of as the Anglo-Saxon world was so often shaped by those from Scandinavia.

BERNARD WALSH/NETFLIX © 2021 XI, COURTESY OF NETFLIX © 2022 XI

WEEKLY TV & RADIO
Visit ***historyextra.com*** for updates on upcoming TV and radio programmes

Chuck D (*far right*) with Public Enemy in 1988. The hip hop icon contributes to a new BBC Two series charting the genre's origins

From the streets to mainstream

Fight the Power: How Hip Hop Changed the World / BBC Two, starts Saturday 21 January

Hip hop, which began as a music of the disenfranchised, has come to be the music to which the whole world listens. How this came about is the subject of a four-part series featuring, among other luminaries, Public Enemy's Chuck D, also the programmes' executive producer.

This is partly a musical history, but it's also the story of how hip hop has so often critiqued American society. Public Enemy's breakthrough album, remember, was called *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (1988).

"The hip hop community has, from the start, been doing what the rest of media is only now catching up to," noted Chuck D when then series was announced. "Long before any conglomerate realised it was time to wake up, hip hop had been speaking out and telling truths."

A new series reveals how Adolf Hitler rose up through the ranks of the Nazi Party, transforming it from a little-known fringe organisation into a terrifying political force

A series of unfortunate events

Nazis: The Road to Power / BBC Radio 4, starts Thursday 12 January

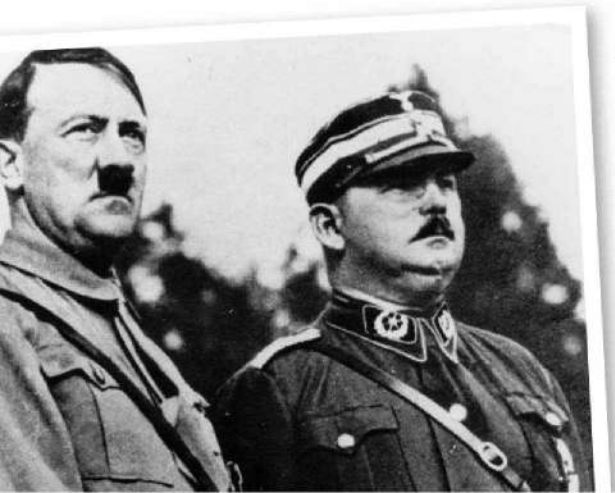
At the end of World War I, Germany was in a parlous state. Defeat in the wake of spring gains on the Western Front had been a profound shock, food was so scarce that people were starving, and revolutionary fervour was in the air.

One of those looking for a new way forward in this uncertain world was an Austrian-born *Gefreiter*, or lance-corporal, Adolf Hitler. In 1919, he began working as an intelligence agent, tasked with monitoring the fringe political parties that were springing up in Munich, including the German Workers' Party (DAP) – a short-lived far-right precursor to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the Nazis.

But rather than report back to his handler, Captain Karl Mayr (1883–1945), Hitler ultimately ascended the ranks of the Nazi Party. Even more extraordinary – and this really was the result of a chain of unlikely happenings – was the fact he would lead a group of fanatics, conspiracy theorists and thugs into power. How did this happen?

Scripted by Jonathan Myerson, who last year wrote *Nuremberg* for BBC Radio 4, the eight-part *Nazis: The Road to Power* traces the story. In doing so, it brings little-remembered characters out of the shadows of history, figures such as Ernst Röhm, the gay leader of the Sturmabteilung militia (SA) and Hitler's niece, Geli Raubal, who died in 1931, apparently by her own hand.

The series promises "staggering revelations" gleaned from Joseph Goebbels' diaries. A strong cast includes Toby Stephens as Mayr and, as the ageing President Hindenburg (1847–1934), the man who appointed Hitler as chancellor of Germany in 1933, Derek Jacobi.



Hitler pictured alongside SA leader Ernst Röhm, who would later meet his end on the Night of the Long Knives in 1934

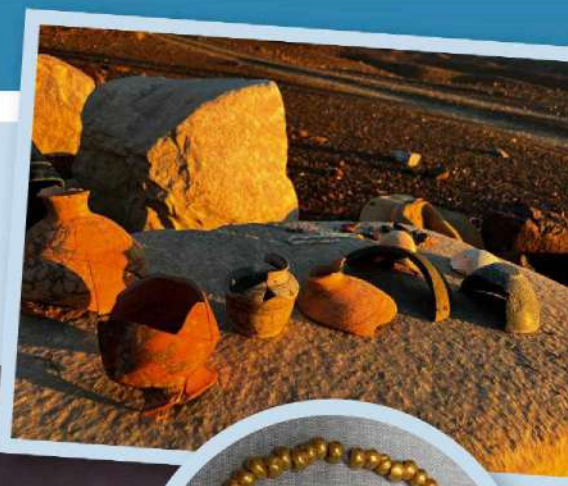
Detectives appeal for information about the Brink's-Mat robbery, 1983. Most of the gold has still not been recovered

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X1, SANDSTONE GLOBAL PRODUCTIONS X3

Ancient marvels

Bettany Hughes' Treasures of the World

Channel 4, late January



RIGHT: **One episode sees Hughes showcasing a collection of Bronze Age artefacts found in Oman**

BELOW RIGHT: **Other items featured in the series include this ancient necklace from Cyprus**

In Europe, the stories we tell of the ancient world focus primarily on the Greeks and the Romans. But this focus perhaps makes us overlook just how connected these civilisations were to the wider world, notably via trade routes to Asia. Along these routes, including those that came to be known as the Silk Roads, researchers are excavating sites and uncovering artefacts that are radically changing our understanding of the past.

These are the kinds of sites that Bettany Hughes seeks out in the second season of her international archaeology series, which finds her visiting Albania, Cyprus, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Jordan and Oman.

Much of what she sees will be unfamiliar to most viewers. In Oman's Hajar Mountains, for example, she sees hand-hewn mines that once supplied the copper that made the Bronze Age possible.

Other sites she visits were important closer to our own time. In Albania, Hughes heads for Tirana to see artefacts recovered from a dig high in the mountains above Lake Koman. Here, at a site accessible only via horseback, archaeologists have found evidence of a lost medieval city, where people once made a living trading minerals and bitumen. Hughes and her team hope to return to Albania to film at the site later this year.

Bettany Hughes ventures across Europe and the Middle East in five new episodes of her Channel 4 documentary series

Crime and its proceeds

The Gold / BBC One, date TBC

Viewed from the perspective of the cybercrime era, events nearly 40 years ago on 26 November 1983, when six armed men broke into the Brink's-Mat security depot near Heathrow Airport have a curiously *quaint* quality. This was, to quote detectives at the time, "a typical Old Kent Road armed robbery", albeit that most heists didn't yield gold bullion, diamonds and cash to the value of £26m, equivalent to more than £100m today.

In truth, this was a crime we can't in any way romanticise. In particular, it must have been especially terrifying to the staff doused with petrol and threatened with immolation if they didn't reveal the combination of the facility's vault.

It was also a crime with a terrible legacy in that new money-laundering techniques were needed to rinse the proceeds of the crime. This in turn led to new links being forged between blue-collar and white-collar criminals. Dirty money linked to the raid helped fuel the 1980s property boom in London's Docklands.

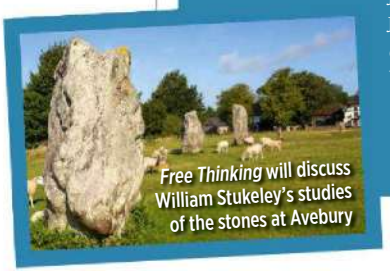
Over six episodes, *The Gold* tells the story of both the raid and its aftermath. *Downton Abbey*'s Hugh Bonneville leads a starry cast that also includes Dominic Cooper, Jack Lowden and Charlotte Spencer. The script is by Neil Forsyth, whose previous writing credits include *Guilt* and *Eric, Ernie & Me*.

Shared ideas

Free Thinking / BBC Radio 3, January

Broadcasting three times a week, Tuesday–Thursday, *Free Thinking* is BBC Radio 3's long-running discussion show. It's a programme that consistently tackles historical subjects in a way that makes the latest research accessible to all.

Highlights in the next few weeks include an episode that explores the work of proto-archaeologist William Stukeley (1687–1785), who was fascinated by sites such as Avebury and Stonehenge (Wednesday 25 January). Listen out too for an instalment that looks at the 17th-century Civil Wars (Tuesday 31 January), and features Jonathan Healey, author of the forthcoming book *The Blazing World: A New History of Revolutionary England*.



Free Thinking will discuss William Stukeley's studies of the stones at Avebury

BOOKS & PODCASTS

THIS MONTH'S BEST HISTORICAL READS AND LISTENS

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Hollywood: The Oral History

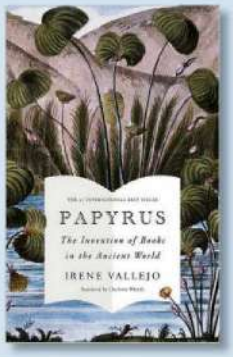
By Jeanine Basinger and Sam Wasson
Faber & Faber, £25, hardback, 768 pages

Drawing on the American Film Institute's vast repository of oral-history testimony spanning more than five decades, this tour through Tinseltown's past focuses on the reminiscences of a suitably stellar cast of contributors. Some are familiar names, including Julie Andrews, Steven Spielberg and Michael Caine, while offerings from film historians and figures from Hollywood's formative days help fill in the gaps. As you might expect, it's by turns insightful and gossipy, celebratory and caustic – a fitting tribute, in other words, to an industry defined by vertiginous extremes.

Papyrus: The Invention of Books in the Ancient World

By Irene Vallejo
Hodder & Stoughton, £25, hardback, 464 pages

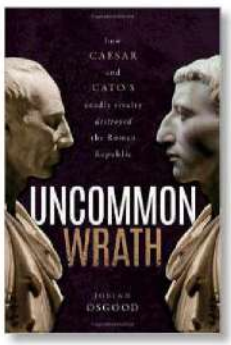
First published in Spanish in 2019, this is a fascinating, sprawling study of the ways in which books, and reading, transformed the ancient world. That story, of vast libraries and literary works deemed so valuable they were worth dying for, is enthralling enough in its own right. But Irene Vallejo also skilfully chronicles how it has shaped our view of books in the centuries since, weaving in case studies as diverse as World War II concentration camps and 20th-century classrooms.

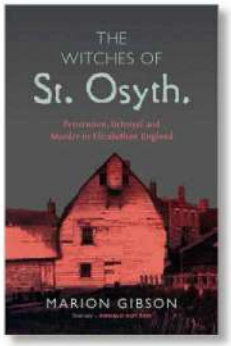


Uncommon Wrath: How Caesar and Cato's Deadly Rivalry Destroyed the Roman Republic

By Josiah Osgood
Oxford University Press, £25, hardback, 352 pages

This dual biography of duelling ancient Roman statesmen Julius Caesar and Cato the Younger examines how their contesting views of what the Roman Republic should stand for eventually led to its decline in the first century BC. Sharp of intellect with a devoted following, both men were ultimately unable to harness either as a positive force, and this book charts the ideological divisions and political machinations that catalysed personal conflict into all-out civil war.





The Witches of St Osyth: Persecution, Betrayal and Murder in Elizabethan England

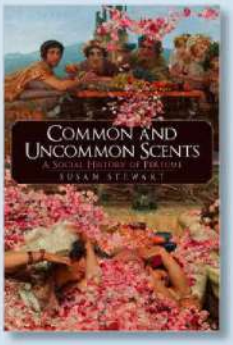
By Marion Gibson
Cambridge University Press, £30, hardback, 256 pages

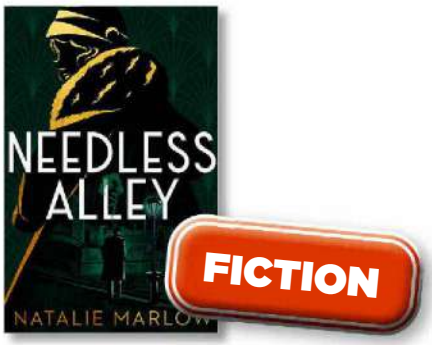
In 1581, young Davy Thurlowe was afflicted by a mysterious illness. His hands, it was said, were positioned strangely, their palms rotated outwards. Alarmed, his parents turned to Ursley Kempe, a healer who claimed to have experience with bewitchment. What happened next would engulf the Essex village of St Osyth – with tragic consequences. This book looks at the case anew, setting the events into their wider context.

Common and Uncommon Scents: A Social History of Perfume

By Susan Stewart
Amberley, £22.99, hardback, 288 pages

How did the ancient Egyptians make perfume? Why did incense become an important part of Christian worship during the medieval period? And what would an 18th-century wig have smelled like? Answers to these, and other potent olfactory questions, can be found in Susan Stewart's guide to centuries of scents. Exploring the production, uses, social status and perceived benefits of perfume in the Middle East, Europe, and America, she combines basenotes of social history with a heady bouquet of religion, medicine and economics.





Needless Alley

By Natalie Marlow
Baskerville, £16.99, hardback, 336 pages

Setting a hardboiled 1930s detective noir amid the grim streets and canals of interwar Birmingham, this dark, atmospheric novel follows private investigator William Garrett – who, it's fair to say, is already a bundle of nerves – as he's unwittingly caught up in a deadly world of fascism and fanaticism. Author Natalie Marlow draws on the period's political tensions and sexual mores to craft a compelling, vividly drawn tale of moral corruption and urban decay.

PODCAST WHAT TO LISTEN TO...

Each month we bring you three of our favourite podcasts from the BBC and HistoryExtra

How ballroom dancing gripped Britain

bit.ly/BallroomPod117

Cha-cha-chart the rise, fall and fabulous resurgence of ballroom dancing in Britain with this episode of the *HistoryExtra* podcast, released in 2022. Speaking to Emily Briffett, author Hilary French delves into our fascination with fancy footwork over the decades, and reveals what it tells us about the nation's economic fortunes and social values.

The History Hour: District Six and daredevils

bit.ly/DistrictPod117

During the 1970s, thousands of non-white residents of Cape Town's District Six were expelled by South Africa's apartheid regime. This episode of *The History Hour*, which brings together clips from the BBC World Service's *Witness History* series, tells their stories – as well as those of a Soviet style guru and a man who jumped to Earth from space.

The story of Britain's World War II spies

bit.ly/SpiesPod117

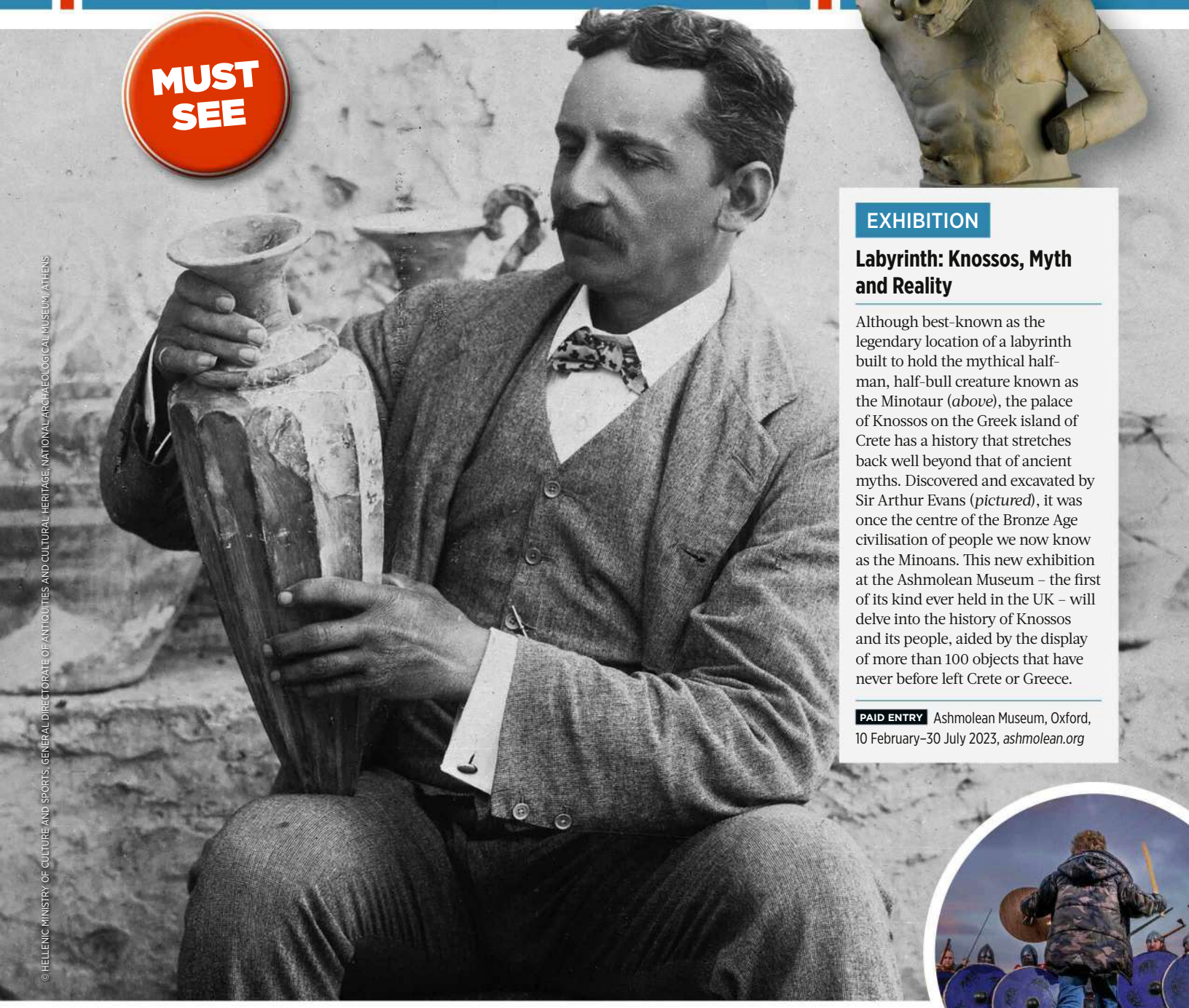
What dangers did British spies face during World War II? How were they selected? And why did the Special Operations Executive once devise a plot involve exploding rats? In this episode of *HistoryExtra*'s 'Everything You Wanted to Know About...' series, Helen Fry shines a light on some of history's most audacious covert operations.

GETTY IMAGES X1

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

WHAT TO SEE AND WHERE TO VISIT IN THE WIDER WORLD OF HISTORY

MUST SEE



© HELLENIC MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS, GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF ANTIQUITIES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE, NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, ATHENS

EXHIBITION

Labyrinth: Knossos, Myth and Reality

Although best-known as the legendary location of a labyrinth built to hold the mythical half-man, half-bull creature known as the Minotaur (*above*), the palace of Knossos on the Greek island of Crete has a history that stretches back well beyond that of ancient myths. Discovered and excavated by Sir Arthur Evans (*pictured*), it was once the centre of the Bronze Age civilisation of people we now know as the Minoans. This new exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum – the first of its kind ever held in the UK – will delve into the history of Knossos and its people, aided by the display of more than 100 objects that have never before left Crete or Greece.

PAID ENTRY Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 10 February–30 July 2023, *ashmolean.org*

EXHIBITION

Golden Mummies of Egypt

Featuring eight mummies from the collections of Manchester Museum, this exhibition explores ideas of the afterlife in Egypt when it was part of the Greek and Roman worlds. As well as the chance to learn more about ancient beliefs, visitors can digitally 'unwrap' three of the mummies thanks to a series of interactive displays.

FREE ENTRY Manchester Museum, opens in February 2023, *museum.manchester.ac.uk*

EXHIBITION

Gladiators: A Cemetery of Secrets

In 2004–05, archaeologists unearthed 80 sets of human remains in York, thought to date from the early second century to the late third century AD. Were they, as their injuries suggest, a group of gladiators living in the city? Explore the latest research in this exhibition at Cirencester's Corinium Museum and make up your own mind.

PAID ENTRY Corinium Museum, Cirencester, until 23 April 2023, *coriniummuseum.org*

FESTIVAL

Jorvik Viking Festival

York's fun-filled Viking festival is back for another year, with a host of activities and events. Hear about the latest discoveries from leading Viking experts at the annual Festival Symposium, or see the accounts of Ibn Fadlan – an Arabic witness to the ferocity of the Norsemen – brought to life after dark.

PAID ENTRY Various locations, York, 11–19 February 2023, *jorvikvikingfestival.co.uk*

CROSSWORD

TEST YOURSELF WITH OUR HISTORICAL PUZZLE EVERY ISSUE

CROSSWORD No. 117

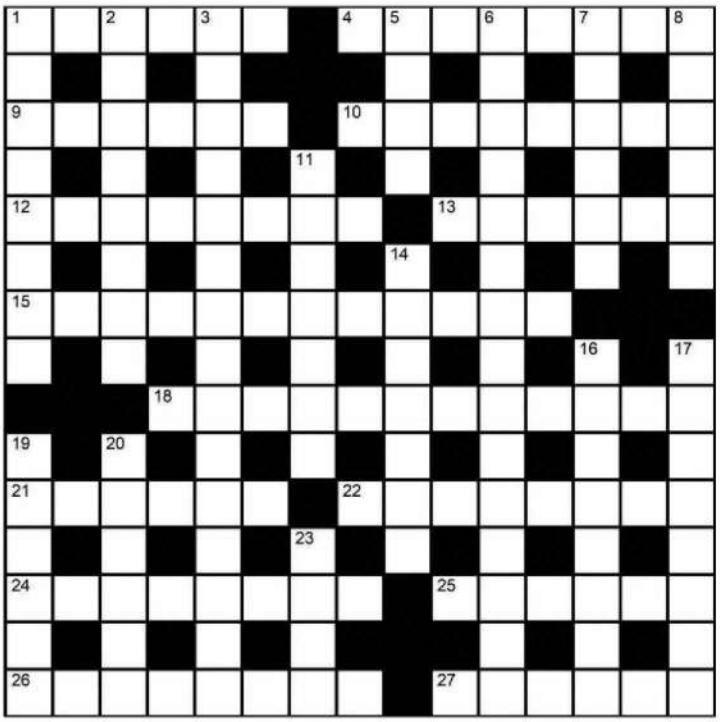
Test your history knowledge to solve our prize puzzle – and you could win a fantastic new book

ACROSS

1 ___ *is the Night*, 1934 novel by F Scott Fitzgerald (6)
4 Nickname for the St James's area of Westminster (8)
9 Component of the medieval social order, such as the clergy or nobility (6)
10 Queen of Great Britain and Ireland from 1837 to 1901 (8)
12 1851 work by George Borrow (8)
13 Title adopted by Benito Mussolini (2,4)
15 Silent film star known as 'The Great Stone Face' (1895–1966) (6,6)
18 Reactionary character created by the cartoonist David Low (7,5)
21 Capital city of Angola, founded in 1576 (6)
22 Captain of Pharaoh's guard, in the Old Testament (8)
24 Pen-name of François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778) (8)
25 JM ___ (1860–1937), author of the play *Peter Pan* (1904) (6)
26 State of southern Africa from 1965 to 1979 (8)
27 Trade union formed in 1993 (6)

DOWN

1 Elizabethan theatre destroyed by fire in 1613 (3,5)
2 Ethnocentric nationalist belief (8)
3 Anglo-French agreement of 1904 (7,8)
5/11 Norse explorer who sailed to North America in the late 10th century (4,7)
6 Air conflict of July–October 1940 (6,2,7)
7 Father of Agamemnon and Menelaus, in Greek myth (6)
8 ___ Drum, naval artefact celebrated in a poem by Sir Henry Newbolt (6)
11 See 5 across
14 Legendary court of King Arthur (7)
16 Sir IVA ___ (b1952), Antiguan cricketer (8)
17 Charles ___ (1834–92), English Baptist preacher (8)
19 1960 musical based on a Charles Dickens novel of 1838 (6)
20 Lookout's cry, at sea (4,2)
23 Adolfo ___ (1888–1972), Italian industrialist and car manufacturer (4)



Set by Richard Smyth

CHANCE TO WIN

BOOK WORTH £14.99 FOR THREE WINNERS

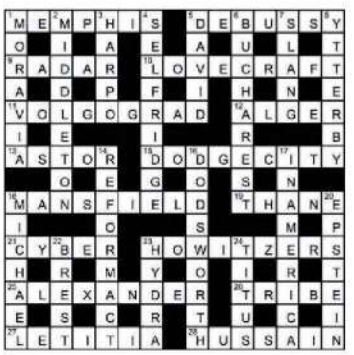
Toffee Apples and Quail Feathers
by Jennifer Worth

HOW TO ENTER

Post entries to **BBC History Revealed, February 2023 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA** or email them to **february2023@historyrevealedcomps.co.uk** by noon on **1 March 2023**.

By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in the box below. Immediate Media Co Ltd, publishers of *BBC History Revealed*, would love to keep you informed by post or telephone of special offers and promotions from the Immediate Media Co Group. Please write 'Do Not Contact IMC' if you prefer not to receive such information by post or phone. If you would like to receive this information by email, please write your email address on the entry. You may unsubscribe from receiving these messages at any time. For more about the Immediate Privacy Policy, see the box below.
Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ☐ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: *bbcstudios.com/privacy*

SOLUTION Nº 115



CROSSWORD COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

The competition is open to all UK residents (inc. Channel Islands), aged 18 or over, except Immediate Media Co London Ltd employees or contractors, and anyone connected with the competition or their direct family members. By entering, participants agree to be bound by these terms and conditions and that their name and county may be released if they win. Only one entry per person.

The closing date and time is as shown under **How to Enter**, above. Entries received after that will not be considered. Entries cannot be returned. Entrants must supply full name, address and daytime phone number. Immediate Media Company (publishers of ***BBC History Revealed***) will only ever use personal details for the purposes of administering this competition, and will not publish them or provide them to anyone without permission. Read more about the Immediate Privacy Policy at *www.immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy*. The winning entrants will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. The prize and number of winners will be as shown on the Crossword page. There is no cash alternative and the prize will not be transferable. Immediate Media Company London Limited's decision is final and no correspondence relating to the competition will be entered into. The winners will be notified by post within 28 days of the close of the competition. The name and county of residence of the winners will be published in the magazine within two months of the closing date. If the winner is unable to be contacted within one month of the closing date, Immediate Media Company London Limited reserves the right to offer the prize to a runner-up.
Immediate Media Company London Limited reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions or to cancel, alter or amend the promotion at any stage, if deemed necessary in its opinion, or if circumstances arise outside of its control. The promotion is subject to the laws of England. Promoter: Immediate Media Company London Limited

JANUARY Sale

Make discovering new passions your New Year's resolution in 2023!

Get started with a great value trial offer for one of our bestselling magazines.

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

12 ISSUES FOR £1

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

3 ISSUES FOR £5

GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE:

- Save up to 75% **+ free delivery**
- Continue to make **great savings** after your trial period
- **Never miss an issue** of your favourite magazine

2 EASY WAYS TO ORDER

Visit **buysubscriptions.com/JS23SP**

Call **0330 053 8660**† quote code **JS23SP**

Trusted Service Award 2022 feefo

*This offer closes on 31st January 2023 and is valid for UK delivery addresses and by direct debit only. The discounts shown are savings calculated as a percentage of the full shop price, excluding Radio Times which is calculated as a percentage of the basic annual rate. For overseas rates visit www.buysubscriptions.com. Should the magazine ordered change in frequency; we will honour the number of issues and not the term of the subscription. You are free to cancel your subscription at any time – if you cancel within 2 weeks of receiving your penultimate issue you will pay no more than the trial rate, this is except for Radio Times, which you will need to cancel 3 weeks before the trial is due to end. Radio Times is published weekly and the Basic Annual UK Subscription rate for Radio Times is £238. This price is for one year and includes the Christmas double issue and a contribution towards postage. These rates are correct at time of printing. We run trial offers throughout the year to give our customers an opportunity to try a new title before committing to a long-term subscription. These are introductory offers, and we reserve the right to reject or cancel any application for a trial subscription offer if the customer has previously purchased a trial offer for the same magazine or any other magazine in the Immediate Media portfolio. For a full list of our titles visit buysubscriptions.com/portfolio. †UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed line numbers (starting 01 or 02) and are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). Outside of free call packages call charges from mobile phones will cost between 3p and 55p per minute. Lines are open Mon to Fri 9am – 5pm.

NEXT ISSUE

··· ON SALE 16 FEBRUARY ···

THE ROARING TWENTIES

Separate fact from fiction and discover whether life during the 1920s – in Britain and the US – was really as decadent as popular culture would have us believe

PLUS... IN PICTURES: VICTORIAN ZOOS THE MARCH OF THE BLANKETEERS **SPOTLIGHT ON BESS OF HARDWICK** SEVEN THINGS YOU (PROBABLY) DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE HISTORY OF LONDON **WHAT IF... THE SCHLIEFFEN PLAN HAD ACTUALLY WORKED?** AND MUCH MORE...

CROSSWORD WINNERS

The three lucky winners of the prize crossword in issue 114 are as follows:

D Findlay, Shropshire
H Griffiths, Hampshire
J Sandiford, Berkshire

Congratulations! You've each won a copy of *Persians: The Age of the Great Kings* by Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones.

We will post your prizes out as soon as possible.

CONTACT US

facebook.com/HistoryExtra twitter.com/HistoryExtra @HistoryExtra

EMAIL US: haveyoursay@historyrevealed.com
OR POST: Have Your Say, BBC History Revealed, Immediate Media, Eagle House, Colston Avenue, Bristol, BS1 4ST

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES:

PHONE: 03330 162 116
EMAIL VIA: *www.buysubscriptions.com/contactus*
OR POST: BBC History Revealed, PO Box 3320, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton, NN4 7BF
EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES: 0117 927 9009

OVERSEAS: In the US/Canada you can contact us at:
Immediate Media, PO Box 401, Williamsport, PA 17703, USA
PHONE: Toll-free 888-941-5623
EMAIL VIA: immediatemedia@buysubscriptions.com

BBC HISTORY REVEALED

ISSUE 117 – FEBRUARY 2023

BBC History Revealed is published by Immediate Media Company London Limited under licence from BBC Studios who help fund new BBC programmes

EDITORIAL
Editor Charlotte Hodgman
charlotte.hodgman@immediate.co.uk
Production Editor Jon Bauckham
Staff Writer Danny Bird
Art Editor Sheu-Kuei Ho

DIGITAL
Digital Editor Elinor Evans
elinor.evans@immediate.co.uk
Deputy Digital Editor Kev Lochun
Premium Content Editor Rachel Dinning
Podcast Editor Ellie Cawthorne

CONTRIBUTORS & EXPERTS
Helen Carr, Ian Castle, Rowena Cockett, Michael Cocks, Nell Darby, Rhiannon Davies, Matt Elton, Rebecca Franks, John Hatcher, Fiona Kay, Spencer Mizen, Lisa Moses, Gordon O'Sullivan, Richard Smyth, Neil Storey, Nige Tassell, Charlotte Topsfield, Daniel Watkins, Jonny Wilkes, Greg Woolf, Jonathan Wright

PRESS & PR
Communications Manager
Natasha Lee *natasha.lee@immediate.co.uk*

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager John Lawton

ADVERTISING & MARKETING
Advertisement Manager
Sam Jones 0117 300 8145
sam.jones@immediate.co.uk
Senior Brand Sales Executive
Sam Evanson 0117 300 8544
Brand Sales Executive
Sarah Luscombe 0117 300 8530
Group Direct Marketing Manager
Laurence Robertson 00353 5787 57444
Subscriptions Director
Jacky Perales-Morris
Subscriptions Marketing Manager
Sally Longstaff
Direct Marketing Manager
Aisha Babb
US Representative
Kate Buckley *buckley@buckleypell.com*

PRODUCTION
Production Director Sarah Powell
Production Coordinator Holly Donmall
Ad Coordinator Channing Lee
Ad Designer Julia Young

PUBLISHING
Content Director David Musgrove
Commercial Director Jemima Dixon
CEO Sean Cornwell
CFO & COO Dan Constanda
Executive Chairman Tom Bureau

BBC STUDIOS, UK PUBLISHING
Chair, Editorial Review Boards
Nicholas Brett
Managing Director, Consumer Products and Licensing Stephen Davies
Director, Magazines and Consumer Products Mandy Thwaites
Compliance Manager
Cameron McEwan *uk.publishing@bbc.com*

Basic annual subscription rates
UK £64.87 **Eire/Europe** £67.99
ROW £69.00

IMMEDIATE MEDIA CO

© **Immediate Media Company London Limited.**
All rights reserved. No part of *BBC History Revealed* may be reproduced in any form or by any means either wholly or in part, without prior written permission of the publisher. Not to be resold, lent, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of trade at more than the recommended retail price or in mutilated condition. Printed in the UK by William Gibbons Ltd. The publisher, editor and authors accept no responsibility in respect of any products, goods or services which may be advertised or referred to in this issue or for any errors, omissions, misstatements or mistakes in any such advertisements or references.

recycle

ipso Regulated

GETTY IMAGES

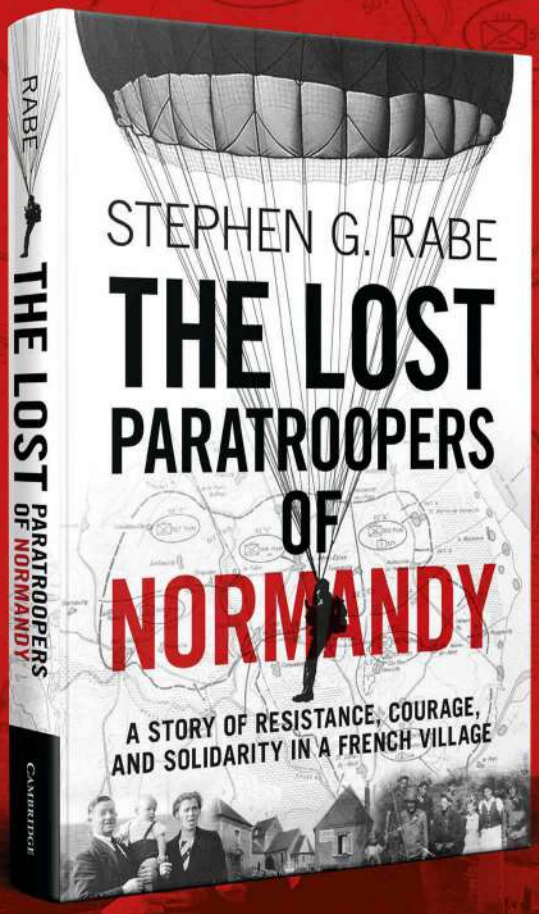
PHOTO FINISH

ARRESTING IMAGES FROM THE ANNALS OF THE PAST

SCOOTING OFF c1916

Electric scooters are growing in popularity around the world, part of a movement towards greener transport. Yet as this photograph from World War I shows, souped-up scooters have been around for more than a century. British suffragist and activist Lady Florence Norman, seen here, would hop on to her motorised scooter to get to her offices in London, where she supervised as a war-worker. Her American 'Autoped' was petrol-fuelled rather than electric, and was in vogue on both sides of the Atlantic, offering an affordable alternative to the car. This particular novelty two-wheeler was a birthday present from Lady Florence's husband, the journalist and Liberal politician Sir Henry Norman. "Anybody who can ride a bicycle can ride a motor scooter," she told one newspaper. Despite their wartime success, motor scooters fell out of favour until the 2020s.

GETTY IMAGES



STEPHEN G. RABE

THE LOST PARATROOPERS OF NORMANDY

A STORY OF RESISTANCE, COURAGE, AND SOLIDARITY IN A FRENCH VILLAGE

"Stephen G. Rabe provides a fascinating and multi-layered military, diplomatic, and social history of US World War II paratroopers, French villagers, and the protection they gave each other in June 1944. In the process, he provides a fitting tribute to his father, who was one of those paratroopers."

MARK A. STOLER, author of *Allies in War: Britain and America against the Axis Powers, 1940–1945*

9781009206372 | £20.00 | Hardback | November 2022

cambridge.org/LostParatroopers

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Pearson

Become a Pearson history examiner

Have you ever thought about becoming an examiner? At Pearson we're currently recruiting history examiners for the May/June 2023 exam series.

What are the benefits of being an examiner?

- Develop a deeper level of subject understanding and knowledge and the assessment process.
- Flexibility to work remotely around other commitments and increase your income.
- Help your students to progress by gaining insights into the assessment process which will help you to prepare your learners for their exams.
- Network with your fellow educational professionals, sharing great ideas and building a support network.
- Share your assessment expertise and unique insights with your whole department to encourage a consistent approach to marking across your whole team.
- Progression and CPD.

Full training and support will be provided

Come and join our team. To find out more, visit **https://edxl.online/history**

D0080 © image/Shutterstock/US_Mar_20